The Senator Gravel Edition

THE Pentagon Papers

Critical Essays
Edited by Noam Chomsky
and Howard Zinn
and an Index to
Volumes One-Four

VOLUME FIVE

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Critical Essays Edited by
Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn
and an Index to
Volumes One–Four

Volume V

Beacon Press Boston

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Library of Congress catalog card number: 75–178049
International Standard Book Number: 0–8070–0522–3 (hardcover)
0–8070–0523–1 (paperback)

Beacon Press books are published under the auspices
of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Published simultaneously in Canada by Saunders of Toronto, Ltd.

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Printed in the United States of America

Contents of the Gravel Edition, Volumes I–IV

VOLUME I

Introduction by U.S. Senator Mike Gravel
Letter of Transmittal by Leslie H. Gelb
1. Background to the Conflict, 1940–1950
2. U.S. Involvement in the Franco–Viet Minh War, 1950–1954
3. The Geneva Conference, May–July, 1954
4. U.S. and France in Indochina, 1950–1956
5. Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954–1960

VOLUME II

1. The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961
2. The Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961–1963
3. Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, 1962–1964
4. The Overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem, May–November 1963
5. US–GVN Relations, 1964–1967
6. The Advisory Build-up, 1961–1967
7. Re-emphasis on Pacification: 1965–1967

VOLUME III

1. U.S. Programs in South Vietnam, November 1963–April 1965
2. Military Pressures Against North Vietnam, February 1964–January 1965
3. The Air War in North Vietnam: Rolling Thunder Begins, February–June, 1965
4. American Troops Enter the Ground War, March–July, 1965

VOLUME IV

1. The Air War in North Vietnam, 1965–1968
2. U.S. Ground Strategy and Force Deployments, 1965–1968

[*At the end of each volume is a collection of documents, a section entitled "Justification of the War—Public Statements," and a Glossary*]

Contents of Volume V

Editors' Preface ix

Notes on the Contributors xi

1. The American Goals in Vietnam by Gabriel Kolko 1
2. Business Ideology and Foreign Policy: The National Security Council and Vietnam by Richard B. Du Boff 16
3. A Vietnamese Viewpoint by Truong Buu Lam 32
4. The Media and the Message by James Aronson 41
5. The Receiving End by Wilfred Burchett 60
6. Ideology and Society: The Pentagon Papers and North Vietnam by Gerard Chaliand 82
7. "Tell Your Friends that We're People" by Don Luce 91
8. The Superdomino in Postwar Asia: Japan in and out of the Pentagon Papers by John W. Dower 101
9. The Last Line of Defense by Nina S. Adams 143
10. "Supporting" the French in Indochina? by Philippe Devillers 159
11. The Pentagon Papers as Propaganda and as History by Noam Chomsky 179
12. The Rise and Fall of "Counterinsurgency": 1961–1964 by David G. Marr 202
13. Vietnamization and the Drama of the Pentagon Papers by Peter Dale Scott 211

14. The Pentagon Papers and the United States Involvement in Laos by Walt Haney 248

15. Beyond the Pentagon Papers: The Pathology of Power by Fredric Branfman 294

A Note on the Three Editions of the Pentagon Papers 314

The Tonkin Gulf Narrative and Resolutions 320

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Appendix

[The indices and glossary cover
The Senator Gravel Edition, Volumes I–IV.]

Name Index 3

Subject Index 21

Glossary 67

Editors' Preface

The documentary history of American policy in Vietnam compiled by researchers for the Department of Defense, known now as the Pentagon Papers, became public property in 1971 against the wishes of the United States government. This seems only proper when we consider that for seven years this government has been carrying on a war of annihilation in Indochina against the wishes of the people there, and now against the wishes of the American people, too. Those who made the Pentagon Papers public have laid out for general scrutiny the story of American war policy and have exposed the coldness of mind, the meanness of spirit, behind that policy.

As a sign that this country, born with thrilling phrases about freedom, has not been truly free, there was peril for those who informed the American people of the decisions that sent their sons to war. The *New York Times* was brought into court by the government, and while a Supreme Court decision saved it from an injunction to prevent publication, the possibility of later prosecution was left open. Such prosecution has indeed begun of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo. It was they who defied the doctrine of secrecy, showing that true patriotism which asks dedication not to one's government, but to one's country and countrymen.

Beacon Press, not nearly so wealthy or huge an enterprise as the *New York Times,* had the audacity to print the bulk of the Pentagon Papers, those which Senator Mike Gravel had in his possession and which he began to read into the record one dramatic night in Washington in the summer of 1971. Four massive volumes were required for this: a mountain of information for scholars and citizens. The volumes contain a thousand pages of documents, three thousand pages of narrative, and two hundred pages of public statements by government officials trying to explain American involvement in Vietnam.

Those of us who began to explore these pages soon realized that something more was needed. An index, of course, as a guide through the mass of material; and it has been provided here in this volume. But even more important, we could not leave the readers of the four volumes with the commentary of the Pentagon analysts as the last word. These analysts were all people who were working for the military bureaucracy—hardly independent researchers. Furthermore, they were operating under the constraints of a government harassed by the antiwar movement, watching the growing peace sentiments of the American population, and sensitive to any possible hint of criticism. And these researchers were writing their report for one of the engineers of the war—Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that with all the weight of thousands of pages, there are serious omissions in the story, and also gross distortions. "Lies and lacunae" is how the two of us and Arnold Tovell of Beacon Press summarized the insufficiency of the Pentagon Papers, as we discussed them one evening. This volume of essays is the result of that assessment.

We decided to ask men and women who have devoted much of their lives to the Indochina war during these past years to read through the four volumes, and to comment on them. All the people we asked were critics of the war, and we feel no apologies are needed for this deliberate bias: four thousand pages from the Department of Defense are enough from the side of the government. As the volumes of the Gravel edition came off the press, we flew them to our authors, in New Hampshire, in California, in Paris, in Washington, D.C., and many other places—and then the essays began coming in.

A number of the commentators have spent years in Vietnam or Laos, as journalists, as scholars, or as field workers in the countryside. Others have written extensively about the war in Vietnam in books and articles. Most of the writers are Americans, but one is a Vietnamese and several are French, because we wanted to include the viewpoint of these people who have felt and suffered most from the policies of the United States, as well as to draw upon the prior French experience with the anticolonial revolution in Indochina. And, as we anticipated, some of those invited to contribute essays, including a number of Southeast Asians, devoted their time in this spring of 1972 to acting against the war, not writing.

We hope the essays will illuminate for the reader what is obscure in the Pentagon Papers, will suggest what is missing in the official story, will bring forward what is important and might be overlooked. Most of all, we hope they supply what the government documents lack, some sense of the human consequences of this war, so that now Americans will devote time and energy to stopping the unforgivable American assault on the land and people of Southeast Asia.

Noam Chomsky
Howard Zinn

May 5, 1972

Notes on Contributors

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James Aronson was a founder and for many years editor of the radical newsweekly *National Guardian,* which he left in 1967 for a career in writing and teaching. He is the author of *The Press and the Cold War* and *Deadline for the Media.*

Fredric Branfman is the director of Project Air War in Washington, D.C. He was in Laos from 1967 to 1971 with International Voluntary Services and as a freelance journalist. Mr. Branfman studied at the University of Chicago and at Harvard.

Wilfred Burchett, born in Australia, has traveled throughout the world as a journalist for the *Daily Express,* the London *Times, Le Soir, L'Humanité,* the London *Daily Worker,* the *Christian Science Monitor,* the Toronto *Star,* and other newspapers. He was in Indochina at the beginning of the battle of Dien Bien Phu and has been a close observer of the war in Indochina for many years.

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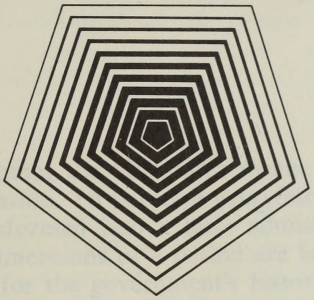
Gravel Edition / Pentagon Papers / Volume V



1. The American Goals in Vietnam

by Gabriel Kolko

Specialization often becomes the historian's means for escaping a reality too complex for his comprehension. To perceive everything about a narrow segment of history is thereby transformed into a tacit admission that the larger, more profound and significant dimensions of a period are beyond one's understanding. This is especially the case for the government's historians or its hired academics who, in addition to the limits of time and difficulty of the topic, must avoid alienating superiors whose biases candor and truth are likely to rankle.

Conversely, there is no doubt that sheer quantity can help overcome self-censorship and myopia inflicted by superiors on mediocrity. Even if the Pentagon Papers' authors did not write good history, much less reflect on it with the kind of intelligence that even conservative historians occasionally show, the vast bulk of the undertaking—with its endless narrative and documents—brings us virtually to the threshold of the essential history of the Vietnam war as seen from the official American perspective. For we can reassess the documents, cast the narrative into a sharply new mold, and isolate the critical bases of the U.S. role in Indochina from the mass of verbiage encrusting the fundamentals of the experience.

The greatest failing of the Pentagon Papers is that they largely divorce the twenty-five-year history of the United States and Indochina from the global context in which Washington's decisionmakers always made policy and perceived the world. They ignore earlier and contemporaneous crises and interventions that are better measures of the sources of policy and give us a keener index by which to assess the causes of policy and conduct often alluded to, however imperfectly, in the Pentagon Papers. And by failing to write concisely, with a view to stressing the main themes which their own evidence clearly sustains, the authors of the Pentagon Papers have buried the major currents of U.S. policy in Indochina under a mass of verbiage.[1]* In this essay I shall seek to extract and analyze some of these central threads—the concept of the domino theory and its real meaning and significance, the notion of "credibility" in the larger context of Washington's global priorities, and the issue of "Vietnamization" and the implications of this futile doctrine to the character and conduct of the terrible war itself.

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* The text for numbered notes is at the end of each essay. *The Pentagon Papers—The Senator Gravel Edition,* 4 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) is cited in parentheses within the essays. Other editions of the Pentagon Papers are cited as USG ed. (U.S. government edition) and NYT/Bantam (New York Times paperback) and NYT/Quadrangle (New York Times hardcover).

I. FOUNDATIONS OF THE INDOCHINA WAR

Obscured in a mass of operational details which never focus on the purpose or even the nature of policy in any real depth, the Pentagon Papers necessarily impart a kind of muddled and accidental character to U.S. policy in Indochina without revealing the firm assumptions which almost invariably cause decisionmakers to select certain options. Such impressions ignore the fact that a nation gets into the sort of complicated, often insoluble difficulties to which its basic national policy and definitions of interests necessarily make it prone, and that its "errors" and muddling appear only when its goals exceed its means for attaining them. In this sense Indochina proved to be only the culminating yet unavoidable miscalculation in a global effort that began well before the Indochina crisis and then ran concurrent to it.

Years before Washington used the domino theory to justify intervention in Southeast Asia, it exploited it in other regions in a manner that revealed the exact substance of this doctrine. Perhaps the first important application of the analogy was in the Middle East in the first two years after World War II. The stakes were entirely explicit: oil and "the raw-material balance of the world," in President Truman's words.[2] The question was to avoid a vacuum of power which the Soviet Union and/or radical nationalism might fill. The extension of specifically U.S. power and, preeminently, economic interests in a region therefore became integral to the domino theory. "If Greece should dissolve into civil war," Secretary of State George C. Marshall argued privately in February 1947, Turkey might then fall and "Soviet domination might thus extend over the entire Middle East and Asia." [3] And this perspective served not merely as the strategic justification for military aid, with the threat of intervention, but the acquisition of ever greater U.S. oil concessions at one and the same time.

Even before the first Indochina crisis, therefore, Washington had hammered out in the real world the functional meaning of the domino theory, and a kind of political-military imperial overhead charge became integral to its later realization of clearly articulated economic goals. Translated into concrete terms, the domino theory was a counterrevolutionary doctrine which defined modern history as a movement of Third World and dependent nations—those with economic and strategic value to the United States or its capitalist associates—away from colonialism or capitalism and toward national revolution and forms of socialism. Insofar as the domino theory was never a timetable, but an assessment of the direction in history of large portions of the world from the control of the Right to the control of the Left, it was accurate. No less important was the first American decision, taken during the Truman Doctrine crisis of early 1947, that intervention in one country largely to save those around it was the inevitable preliminary political and military overhead charges of imperialism. Well before 1950, much less the profound involvement in Indochina after 1960, the U.S. had applied this principle to many other regions of the world. Indochina became the culmination of this effort to expand America's power by saving vast areas of the world for its own forms of political and economic domination.

In the first instance, at least, America's leaders defined the problem of Indochina in its global context. Only later was it to become the transcendent test of the very efficacy of the essential means and goals of U.S. imperialism everywhere. For the major event influencing the U.S. response to the Vietnamese revolution was the final demise of the Kuomintang in China in 1949 and the policy discussions that ensued from that monumental fact. The United States had always been hostile toward the Vietminh, but in mid-1949 the U.S. government made the irrevocable decision to oppose the further extension of "Communism" elsewhere in Asia and Southeast Asia. Although the means by which it would do so were unclear, the principle itself was not in any manner vague, and this prejudged the policy options. Specifically, the United States anticipated a major crisis in Indochina and began to prepare for it, and had the unanticipated outbreak of war in Korea not preempted its main focus it is likely it would have intervened far more aggressively there much earlier. For recognition of the French puppet regimes, and important military and economic aid to them, began before the Korean conflict.

Other considerations, besides resistance to "Communism" in Asia, also entered into the decision to sustain the French in Indochina. All were important, but the precise weight one would assign to each varies over time. There was also the desire to help the French end the war in order to return their troops to Europe so that France would cease to block West German rearmament. So long as France was tied up in colonial ventures, it would lack confidence in its mastery over a resurgent Germany. Then there was the desire to direct Japan toward Southeast Asia's markets and raw materials rather than seeing it emerge as an economic rival elsewhere, or perhaps dependent on Left regimes that could thereby control Japan's future social system. Such an outlook was of an integrated East Asia capitalism, with Japan as its keystone, docilely cooperating with the American metropolis. Next was the entire raw materials question. And lastly was the search for a military doctrine relevant to local revolutionary conflicts rather than global atomic war with industrial states—the beginning of the long and futile American search for a means by which to relate its illusory technological superiority to the dominant social trends of the post–World War II era.[4]

The vital relationship of the future of the Indochina war to European affairs emerges only dimly from the Pentagon Papers, with its erroneous assumption that the United States somewhat unwillingly supported France in Indochina for fear of losing its support for the European Defense Community. But no such French pressure was necessary, for in actuality the United States—for its own reasons—sustained the French cause as its own as well as in the hope of bringing that nation victoriously back to the European arena which the Americans thought more vital in the global context (Gravel ed., I:79–80, 405–407).[5] Given America's passionate anti-Communism, it was inevitable that it associate spiritually as well as materially—to the tune of $3.5 billion by 1954—with France's undertaking. References to anti-Communism, even outside the context of the strategic-economic assumptions of the domino theory analyzed below, were frequent enough in the official American discussion prior to 1954—to the extent of actively considering direct U.S. military intervention against the Vietminh and China (Gravel ed., I:55, 79, 82–83, 363, 375–376).[6]

No less important, and barely alluded to in the Pentagon Papers, was the tortured strategy debate that the Eisenhower administration initiated immediately upon entering office. Basically, it acknowledged the need for a superior military doctrine than the haphazard eclecticism the Truman regime had dumped upon it, and so began a convoluted search for a means by which they could bring together American military technology and economic power, immense by world standards but also finite insofar as the U.S. budget was concerned, for a new, more successful synthesis. The gnawing insecurity which the Korean conflict left among America's political and military leaders, who had failed to impose swiftly and cheaply their will in that conflict, was the first tacit acknowledgment of the profound limits of American power in a decentralized world filled with agrarian revolutions and upheavals. The "New Look" debate of 1953–1954 sought to maximize military results at less cost, and because it lacked concrete precision for specific situations, and eventually proved utterly worthless, the effort left a psychological tension in which Washington thought that perhaps by acting in Indochina to avert French defeat the United States could synthesize success from experience blended with doctrine. The failure of conventional war in Asia—both in Korea and Indochina—colored all American responses to the coming demise of France in Indochina until the Geneva Conference of May 1954. At that time Washington was reduced to the fruitless, eventually incredibly dangerous role of creating obstacles to a final diplomatic resolution of the war in the hope of buying time by which to retain its puppets in at least a portion of Vietnam. The strategic value of the East Asian states, the willingness and capacity of the United States to act against local revolutions with optimum, even nuclear force to sustain the credibility of its numerous pacts and alliances, both privately and publicly appear in the U.S. documents at this time (Gravel ed., I:418, 494).[7] More to the point and illuminating, both in terms of sheer bulk and intrinsic importance, is the articulation of the domino theory in the Southeast Asia context.

It is impossible to divorce the economic and strategic components of the so-called domino theory, because they are far more often than not mentioned in the same private and public discussions of official U.S. policy. To confront the significance of this synthesis of concerns is to comprehend the truly imperialist nature of American policy in Southeast Asia, its precedents and purposes, and quite naturally the authors of the Pentagon Papers failed to assess the constant references to raw materials found in their documents. But policy-makers cannot afford the obscurantism of their court historians, and candor on the objectives of the American undertaking in Asia was the rule rather than the exception.

Indeed, documents in the Pentagon Papers reiterate that as early as 1941 the "supreme importance" of the control of "rubber, tin and other commodities" of the region was a major contributing element in the war with Japan (Gravel ed., I:8). "The fall of Indochina would undoubtedly lead to the fall of the other mainland states of Southeast Asia," the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued in April 1950, and with it Russia would control "Asia's war potential . . . affecting the balance of power" (Gravel ed., I:187). Not only "major sources of certain strategic materials" would be lost, but also communications routes (Gravel ed., I:364). The State Department argued a similar line at this time, writing off Thailand and Burma should Indochina fall. Well before the Korea conflict this became the official doctrine of the United States, and the war there further intensified this commitment (Gravel ed., I:194, 362–364, 373).

The loss of Indochina, Washington had decided by its vast arms shipments to the French as well as by formal doctrine articulated in June 1952, "would have critical psychological, political and economic consequences. . . . The loss of any single country would probably lead to relatively swift submission to or an alignment with communism by the remaining countries of this group. Furthermore, an alignment with communism of the rest of Southeast Asia and India, and in the longer term, of the Middle East (with the probable exceptions of at least Pakistan and Turkey) would in all probability progressively follow. Such widespread alignment would endanger the stability and security of Europe." It would "render the U.S. position in the Pacific offshore island chain precarious and would seriously jeopardize fundamental U.S. security interests in the Far East." The "principal world source of natural rubber and tin, and a producer of petroleum and other strategically important commodities," would be lost in Malaya and Indonesia.

The rice exports of Burma and Thailand would be taken from Malaya, Ceylon, Japan, and India. Eventually, there would be "such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to communism" (Gravel ed., I:83–84). This was the perfect integration of all the elements of the domino theory, involving raw materials, military bases, and the commitment of the United States to protect its many spheres of influence. In principle, even while helping the French to fight for the larger cause which America saw as its own, Washington leaders prepared for direct U.S. intervention when it became necessary to prop up the leading domino—Indochina (Gravel ed., I:375–390).

Privately and publicly, there was no deception regarding the stakes and goals for American power. "Why is the United States spending hundreds of millions of dollars supporting the forces of the French Union in the fight against communism," Vice-President Richard Nixon explained publicly in December 1953. "If Indochina falls, Thailand is put in an almost impossible position. The same is true of Malaya with its rubber and tin. The same is true of Indonesia. If this whole part of Southeast Asia goes under Communist domination or Communist influence, Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist, must inevitably be oriented towards the Communist regime." [8] Both naturally and logically, references to tin, rubber, rice, copra, iron ore, tungsten, and oil are integral to American policy considerations from the inception of the war (Gravel ed., I:407, 421, 436, 450, 473, 594, 597).[9] As long as he was President, Eisenhower never forgot his country's dependence on raw materials imports and the need to control their sources. When he first made public the "falling domino" analogy in April 1954, he also discussed the dangers of losing the region's tin, tungsten, and rubber, and the risk of Japan being forced into dependence on Communist nations for its industrial life—with all that implied (Gravel ed., I:603, 623).[10] Only one point need be mentioned here regarding the understanding of the domino theory. Always implicit in the doctrine was that it was the economic riches of the neighbors of the first domino, whether Greece or Indochina, that were essential, and when the U.S. first intervened into those hapless and relatively poor nations it was with the surrounding region foremost in its calculations. It was this willingness to accept the immense preliminary overhead charges of regional domination that should be as clear in our minds as it was in those of the men who made the decisions to intervene.

But to find a practical way of relating such considerations to reality was not easy for the American leaders, and Dulles' vague threats, beginning at the end of 1953 and continuing until the termination of the Geneva conference, to employ nuclear weapons or U.S. forces scarcely altered the inexorable facts that the Vietminh's military triumphs imposed. From this point onward the modalities for attaining U.S. goals in Southeast Asia were bankrupt, rear-guard efforts designed only to strengthen decaying regimes and the next domino. But the policy itself was only reaffirmed after the French defeat. It was tactically temporarily successful, but strategically disastrous, and the slow unfolding of that fact constitutes the main experience in American history since 1954 (Gravel ed., I:86, 98, 106–107, 177). Indochina becomes the conjunction point, from this time onward, for assorted doctrines and crises that had accumulated during the preceding decade without satisfactory resolution for the controllers of American power. Military power, economic integration, leadership of the world struggle against the tides of revolutionary change—all these crises and frustrations were to fix upon the Indochina experience in some central manner.

II. THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN POWER

This futile American search for a military doctrine capable of mastering the imperatives of U.S. national interests in the world, applying successfully the vast military technology it had hoarded since 1945, and meeting the exigencies of local war all came to a head when President Kennedy entered office. Because this combination of circumstances was part of the generalized crisis in U.S. power in the world that had been gradually building up since the Korean war, Washington's policy toward Indochina was largely colored, especially until 1963, by the global context. This was surely the case while Kennedy was President.

Kennedy had been briefed by President Eisenhower on the domino theory and Southeast Asia immediately before the transfer of power, and the doctrine was accepted as a truism in planning U.S. policy throughout this critical formative period. But no less important, at this time, was the Kennedy administration linkage of events in Cuba or Berlin, and general relations with the USSR, to those in Indochina. The phrase "a symbolic test of strength between the major powers of the West and the Communist bloc" was already being employed during March 1961, and while this proposition does not necessarily capture all dimensions of the causes of U.S. action, it does provide an important psychological insight into how, and why, many actions were taken (Gravel ed., II:33, 48–49, 57, 635–637). "Credibility," in any event, was part of the earlier frustrating U.S. doctrinal debate over "massive retaliation" and the like. The day after the Bay of Pigs invasion capsized, April 20, 1961, the new Administration created a special task force on Southeast Asia that was to help generate a whole new phase of the Indochina crisis. Even publicly, at this time, Kennedy was explicit in linking the events in Vietnam to his concern for the defeat in Cuba, and developments in Europe were no less influential. Put succinctly, given the U.S. failures everywhere else, the United States was prepared to make Laos and Vietnam the test of American resolution, to find new means of warfare as yet unknown, "to grasp the new concepts, the new tools," to quote Kennedy, that might snatch victory from impending defeat for American imperialism elsewhere in the world (Gravel ed., II: 34, 2, 21, 33, 57, 72–73, 801). He quickly sent a "military hardware" team, aware "of the various techniques and gadgets now available," to Saigon (Gravel ed., II: 34). The crucifixion of Indochina that began then to unfold was directed both toward Southeast Asia and the other dominos, but also toward all the rest of revolutionary mankind. It was as if the Americans had decided to make Indochina pay for an unkind history's debts for postwar American imperialism's defeats, defeats that were to evoke the vengeance of the desperate.

This concern for the "psychological impact" of a strong stand in South Vietnam on the events in Berlin and Cuba surely prevailed during the early part of 1962, when an immense expansion of the "limited war" budget and capability of the U.S. military also needed the now traditional international crisis and tensions essential to the quick passage of funding bills in Congress. Along more conventional lines of thought, American planners also calculated the allegedly grievous domino effects as far as Japan, India, and Australia, as that stalwart doctrine imbedded itself yet more deeply. Complementing these thoughts, but less often cited for the period after 1960 by the Pentagon Papers' authors, were the "rice, rubber, teak, corn, tin, spices, oil, and many others" of the nations in the Southeast Asia line of dominos (Gravel ed., II:817, 174–175, 663–665). While men of power naturally assumed this critical definition of the substantive meaning of retaining power in the region, the decline of such references after 1960 is more a reflection on the perceptions and qualities of the authors of the history, or the demands placed on them, than it is of the true reasons. Roughly three-quarters of their study is devoted to the period 1961–1967, during which time probably most of the internal operational documents on which they focus were written, but also because, as the director of the undertaking admits, many earlier documents were not kept or found. Since nowhere in the work do the authors attempt to weigh the relative importance of causal factors, this abdication to quantity of memos and reports leads to myopic history. The economic element, so critical in the longer period of 1945–1959 from their own account, is minimized by default thereafter. The strategic importance of Southeast Asia, and the need to resist the presumed expansionist intentions of China against all Asia, is now their preferred explanation (Gravel ed., I:xvi; II:821–822).

This partiality in treating the causes of the war, whether by default to documents weighted by quantity or ideological preference, extends to such few definitions of the nature of the war that they allude to in the work. None of this is surprising, of course, because "professional" official military historians have been uniformly second-rate since the writing of such history began, but also because the three dozen or so authors who came from other government agencies were, again to quote the project director, "not always versed in the art of research" (Gravel ed., I:xv). Assigning discrete parts to so many different hands, it is not surprising the history lacks thematic consistency or unity, much less reflection and serious evaluations. And, given their professional and personal connections and choices, they are uniformly incapable of transcending the conventional wisdom common in Washington. One of their deficiencies, their incapacity to comprehend the relationship of the war to the Vietnamese masses themselves, and the very nature of the undertaking, makes it quite impossible for them to perceive the larger events after 1963. We must attempt to do so before analyzing the logic of the recent war.

Had the conflict in Vietnam since 1945 been essentially that of a civil war, in which Vietnamese fought Vietnamese, the French and then the American undertaking would have been militarily feasible. Indeed, it might even have been temporarily successful. That it was a military disaster for the vastly superior material forces of the French and now the United States, and that their external military role and aid has always been the source of warfare, is proof of the interventionary and fragile nature of the entire Western effort. Basically, this interventionary, colonial quality of the war has always inevitably produced defeat for the intruders. The United States interceded in Indochina to protect its own national interests, a proposition that holds everywhere else as well. Had there been a social and cultural basis for the successive regimes of its puppets, then the "Vietnamization" of the war would possibly have attained some measure of temporary success sometimes since 1945. Axiomatically, the fact that an appreciable number of Vietnamese could never be found to effectively use their vastly superior weapons against the Vietminh and then the National Liberation Front is evidence that the war was never a civil conflict. And no less axiomatic was the necessity of ever greater foreign commitments—"escalations" as they are now called—to sustain political fictions and loyal elites in power. For military escalation was always the inevitable, logical ancillary of keeping phantom governments alive on behalf of a foreign nation's interests, and this fact was always understood in Washington.

The United States first began its attempt to "Vietnamize" the war in 1950, when its initial economic and military aid went to local puppet forces whose leaders have now long since retired. Roughly 350,000 such troops were being funded by 1953, when the long string of disasters for the French reached a critical point. By early 1961, the approximately 170,000-man army Diem had used to repress opposition with declining success was enlarged to 200,000 (Gravel ed., I: 396, 400, 490–491; II:24, 37, 50). Relying on these men, well armed and formally with superior training, to control the insurgency and manage the country was the public and private objective of Washington's policy from 1961 onward. The desire to prove American "credibility" to the world and stop the dominoes at one and the same time was initially linked to buttressing Diem's forces, not employing America's. During the last half of 1962 the United States further embellished its commitment by seeking to train and equip 458,000 regular and paramilitary Saigon forces by mid-1965, with the NLF resistance scheduled to be under control by the end of that year. The Americans increased their military personnel in South Vietnam from 2,646 at the beginning of 1962, mainly in air transport and support units, to 12,200 during 1964–1965, and even planned their extensive withdrawal, to start during late 1965 (Gravel ed., II:175–179, 186).

If the data in the Pentagon Papers may be accepted on face value, it is clear that the main U.S. decisionmakers truly expected that lavish expenditures of funds and a now relatively small U.S. military contingent would suffice to "Vietnamize" the war. But, as the authors of the study embarrassingly reflected as an aside, "Only the Viet Cong had any real support and influence on a broad base in the countryside" (Gravel ed., II:204). Added to this defining fact was the political chaos and resistance in the urban areas and the deepening instability of the Diem clique. As President Kennedy admitted publicly on September 2, 1963, "I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the [Diem] Government to win popular support that the war can be won out there" (Gravel ed., II:241). Privately, a National Security Council report the following month made precisely the same point and urged the withdrawal of American "advisors" as scheduled (Gravel ed., III:19). Given American awareness of the objective facts at the time, its disenchantment with Diem, and the apparently genuine desire of the key policymakers to withdraw manpower shortly, the subsequent long string of ever more violent escalations can only be understood as a function of the protection of American national interest as it was then defined in terms of economics, the domino, and credibility. This perception of the unpleasant truth regarding "Vietnamization" proved less important than what had to be done in spite of it. For the United States was not in Vietnam to protect a whole series of regimes it scornfully regarded as venial, but its own stakes in Southeast Asia and, as it defined it more broadly, the world. Not because of the palace generals would it abandon South Vietnam. And, if for whatever reason the troops of these corrupt leaders would not fight on behalf of American interests, then a proportionate escalation of American manpower and fire would be required. Washington's error was to miscalculate the economic and human cost to itself in sustaining its immutable objectives in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The subsequent history of the war is quite predictable in light of these fixed poles in its *Weltanschauung*.

The Pentagon Papers document the long sequence of frustrations and failures that ensued after 1963. The main themes in them are the inextricably linked failure of "Vietnamization" and the subsequent escalations at the cost of staving off defeats, the effort to establish credibility in the region and world while balancing against it other priorities in the maintenance of the fragile American empire, and the confrontation, once again, with the limits of American technology in directing the destiny of modern history.

Suffice it to say, the critical year of 1964 was merely the history of the failure of Vietnamization juxtaposed against the desire to sustain credibility—and therefore escalation. Stated in its simplest form in the Pentagon Papers, "In 1964 the U.S. tried to make GVN [Saigon] strong, effective, and stable, and it failed" (Gravel ed., II:277). Vietnamization was a military and a political failure, and talk in Saigon of a popular front, neutralist government was rife by the late summer. Moreover, in 1964, just as Eisenhower had observed with bewilderment in 1961, "Not only do the Viet Cong units have the recuperative powers of the Phoenix, but they have had an amazing ability to maintain morale" (Gravel ed., III:668; see also II:336, 637; III:652, 666–667). Understanding this, however, did not cause the Americans to see that such strength was a decisive element in the larger war. Escalating, they thought, would substitute American firepower for Saigon's defeatism, and overcome the ardor and genius of the NLF.

In part, as well, the United States believed that in escalating, among other things, it could also thereby win time for the Vietnamization process eventually to succeed. It would show "the U.S. continues to mean business" and "tend to lift GVN morale" (Gravel ed., III:561). Pitting steel against dedication suits crackpot realists well, and the notion that it would win Saigon time for its training tasks appears not to have been questioned. Not only would it reveal "a willingness to raise the military ante and eschew negotiations begun from a position of weakness," but by obtaining "a breakthrough in the mutual commitment of the U.S. in Vietnam to a confident sense of victory" it would galvanize the tottering, opportunistic Khanh regime to do better for the United States (Gravel ed., III:78; see also II:344; III:546, 559).

Moreover, as McNamara told Johnson in January 1964, though he much preferred Saigon troops fighting the war, "we cannot disengage U.S. prestige to any significant degree. . . . The consequences of a Communist-dominated South Vietnam are extremely serious both for the rest of Southeast Asia and for the U.S. position in the rest of Asia and indeed in other key areas of the world . . ." (Gravel ed., II:193). "If we leave Vietnam with our tail between our legs," Gen. Maxwell Taylor argued the following September, "the consequences of this defeat in the rest of Asia, Africa, and Latin America would be disastrous" (Gravel ed., II:336). Here was a synthesis of the credibility and domino theories that was to profoundly influence subsequent American policy as well.

Such a combination of doctrines had occurred during the first Eisenhower administration, but it appears likely that the sensitivity to "credibility" was to deepen as U.S. manpower grew, if only because of the failure until then of the soldiers and military implements on which Washington was staking so much elsewhere as well. For if America were to be frustrated in Vietnam, its capacity to control events in other parts of the Third World would be profoundly challenged. In actual policy debates, however, the domino and credibility doctrines tended to be more and more merged: "the South Vietnam conflict is regarded as a test case of U.S. capacity to help a nation to meet a Communist 'war of liberation' " (Gravel ed., III:500; see also III:496–497). The only real issue, from the viewpoint of domino theory, became not the analogy itself but how far the falling dominoes might extend. Indeed, precisely because the United States had put its force on the testing line of battle, the dominoes might fall all the more quickly and emphatically, it was now conjectured. A somewhat milder, less concerned version continued to be issued publicly. But not only nearby states were thrown into a doctrine of falling links, but the unraveling of the Pacific and Asia pacts as well, and even the future of Greece and Turkey in NATO (Gravel ed., III:219–220, 500, 598–599, 622–628, 657–659, 712, 714, 732).

This test case proposition, involving credibility, was honed to a fine doctrine throughout 1964. Not merely the dominoes, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued during January, but the "durability, resolution, and trustworthiness" of the United States would affect "our image in Africa and in Latin America," a clear lesson to revolutionary movements there (Gravel ed., III:497). As the crisis of Vietnam reached a peak during the fall, requiring grave new decisions, "will and capability to escalate the action if required" was trotted out again (Gravel ed., III:208). "U.S. prestige is heavily committed, . . . our standing as the principal helper against Communist expansion" had to be impaired as little as possible, "to protect U.S. reputation as a counter-subversion guarantor" (Gravel ed., III:216, 598; see also III:622, 659), and the like they argued repeatedly, with no objections at all from other decisionmakers. Moreover, Washington fully believed that, in some imperceptible but quite ideological manner, China was the root cause of the Indochina conflict—a notion that could not explain the morale and success of the NLF with the large masses of Vietnamese people. By the end of 1964, as well, the increasingly active role of the USSR in supporting the DRV made it seem, indeed, as if the major enemies the U.S. had chosen for itself were now putting it to the test. Given this concern for the new balance of forces in the war, the implications of defeat for the region and counterrevolution everywhere, and "our reputation," the utter military ineptitude of the vast Saigon army left the American leaders two options—acceptance of reality, with all its concomitant implications for the future of U.S. interventionism and economic power elsewhere, or escalation. In light of the imperatives of postwar American imperialism, and the men at its helm, the choice was foreordained (Gravel ed., III:683; see also III: 115, 266–267, 592, 695).

III. THE LIMITS OF ESCALATION

The history of the war after 1965 is the history of escalation, a period so well known that the Pentagon Papers tell us scarcely more than new operational details about it. Given the visible facts, and the human and military effects of the war then being widely publicized, there can be precious little mystery to fathom. The experience showed an endemic American incapacity to reason outside a profoundly destructive fixed frame of reference, one that reflected conventional wisdom, and an almost self-destructive conformity to it even when its operational bankruptcy was repeatedly revealed in practice. The only surprise in the Pentagon Papers is how little internal opposition to this course existed among those in a position to shape policy, and that appeared well after it was baldly apparent that America's goals greatly exceeded its means and other global obligations. This near unanimity was a result of the total consensus on the nature of national interests among men who attain power, a consensus that again proved that the objectives of U.S. postwar interventionism, rather than being a muddle or accident, brought the nation to its final impasse and defeat. By their own criteria and needs, American leaders did what their system demanded, and had often successfully achieved elsewhere. Their miscalculation was to grossly overestimate U.S. power in relationship to that of the Vietnamese.

More than ever before, the "credibility" argument tended to shape American leadership's responses to developments in Vietnam after 1965. ". . . To avoid humiliation" and "preserve our reputation," or words like it, "appears in countless memoranda," writes a Pentagon Papers author (Gravel ed., IV:22, 47). Domino analogies also are routinely employed, although by 1967 at least some

U.S. leaders, such as Secretary of State Dean Rusk, sought to escape criticism of the assumptions behind it by describing the equivalent phenomenon in presumably more neutral, operational terms. Given these continued durable premises, and the pervasive incapacity of Saigon's army, it was certain that escalation on the United States' part would follow. In 1966, however, its leaders now occasionally appeared to weigh the United States' commitment in Vietnam against its physical obligations and needs elsewhere and the discontent of its European allies. By 1967, indeed, this concern for priorities was supplemented by the graver, immediate problem of the economic costs of the war to domestic inflation and the United States' balance-of-payments problem overseas. As the authors of the Pentagon Papers fail to note later, this consciousness of global priorities and the economic limits of escalation in March 1968 was to begin to impose at least some critical brake on the escalatory process (Gravel ed., IV:88–89, 442, 490, 510, 614, 618, 636, 662, 681).[11]

The Pentagon Papers deluge us with endless details on the process of escalation: there were large escalations, small ones, long and short, wider ones to Laos, more northerly or less, and escalations that were considered and rejected. The dominant fact in this welter of details, much of it superfluous, is that the United States raced up the ladder of munitions tonnages and manpower at a rate that was to prove faster than even the immense American economy could digest, but utterly inadequate to deliver the coveted military victory. Indeed, that triumph would have been denied even had the United States implemented all the schemes it contemplated with their vast risks of war with China. From about 650,000 tons of ground and air munitions in 1965, the United States dropped 2,883,000 tons in 1968, and its manpower increased to 543,000 men in South Vietnam by the end of 1968, plus 230,000 war-related personnel in the surrounding region. That simple fact sets the crucial context for the internal policy debate that was to occur during this period.

The American debates were always encumbered by gnawing contingencies. One problem was that during 1966 the U.S. leaders became aware of the importance of inflation caused by the rapid troop arrivals in aggravating the already moribund Saigon economy. Excessive escalation, in the context of this problem alone, could inflict severe damage on the American undertaking. Then, at the end of 1966, McNamara visited Saigon and concluded that significant escalation, accompanied by progress in the "pacification" program, might convince the public within 18 months—which is to say before the Presidential election—that U.S. victory was attainable in due course thereafter. Until the end of 1967, with one unimportant exception, the issue of escalation in Washington was not its efficacy but the numbers that it had to commit. By May, indeed, the Joint Chiefs were considering ground attacks into Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam, plus the possible use of nuclear weapons against sites in southern China (Gravel ed., IV:171, 180, 239, 353, 369, 378, 442, 457, 461, 490–492).

Despite this vast upsurge of activity, the military results were infinitely less than the American leaders had hoped for, and their military reserves in the world were too small for the undertaking that even some Pentagon analysts thought might drag on indefinitely at any level short of nuclear war. In fact, almost immediately the American fascination with their own material power led to the revelation of the limits of technology in revolutionary warfare in a manner that is certain to have profound repercussions in future and futile American efforts to discover a military doctrine appropriate to its immense technical means and even larger political and economic goals during the remainder of this century. Essentially, every weapons system the Americans applied failed to attain the purposes for which it was intended. In terms of U.S. expenses in bombing North Vietnam during the first year, its losses to the DRV air defense alone were four times the estimated material damage inflicted—but far higher yet in terms of total U.S. costs. More important, with extremely accurate statistical measurement the United States knew that it had failed to deprive the DRV of anything it needed to resist effectively. Its oil storage and transport systems remained more than ample for any demand imposed on them. Its capacity to move men and equipment south increased, and the essence of these frustrating facts were made public at the time. Success via air power, America's leaders learned quickly, was not attainable. But on the ground itself, the Americans concluded by mid-1967, the NLF controlled the terms and timing of combat in almost four-fifths of the engagements (Gravel ed., IV:45, 55–59, 67, 69, 107, 109–112, 457, 461–462, 490). The United States, clearly, could not achieve victory in such a war.

Rather than accept the political conclusions of these defining military facts by withdrawing from Vietnam, the United States turned to other uses for its technology in the hope of grasping victory from the maw of imminent defeat. Internal discussions printed in the Pentagon Papers show that, given the militarily inconclusive nature of the air war, war crimes against civilian populations became an intended consequence of the war. In what it calls a "very influential report," in March 1966 the CIA assessed the feeble results of bombing and outlined the need to turn to "the will of the regime as a target system" (Gravel ed., IV:71). It proposed "a punitive bombing campaign," in the words of the Pentagon Papers (Gravel ed., IV:74). The Americans would bomb without illusions as to the direct military results, but in the hope of breaking a nation's will to resist. In any nation that could only mean the people: the "attrition of men, supplies, equipment and [oil]," to quote a document of the following September (Gravel ed., IV: 110). Four-fifths of the North Vietnamese casualties of the bombing, the CIA reported in January 1967, were civilians. One expression of this, to quote Robert Komer in April 1967 as he set out for Saigon with power to implement his program, was to "Step up refugee programs deliberately aimed at depriving the VC of a recruiting base" (Gravel ed., IV:441; see also IV:136). Or, to quote John McNaughton the earlier year, while urging studies of the feasibility of attacking the dams and locks in the DRV, "by shallow-flooding the rice, it leads after time to widespread starvation (more than a million?) unless food is provided—which we could offer to do 'at the conference table' " (Gravel ed., IV:43).

It was as a result of the failure of orthodox bombing techniques that a group of crackpot realist academics, for the most part self-styled "liberals," were able to concoct and sell the doctrine of electronic warfare. Roger Fisher of the Harvard Law School first proposed it to McNaughton in January 1966, suggesting chemical warfare, mines, and the like stretched in a belt across the DMZ and part of Laos. Over the coming spring and summer, academics such as Carl Kaysen, Jerome Wiesner, and Jerrold Zacharias were able to propose a whole family of antipersonnel concepts and weapons, geared to sensoring and monitoring techniques, to attack manpower. But while such diabolical contrivances could be applied against personnel under other circumstances, the electronic belt was never to be constructed, and electronic warfare itself proved to be at least the same dismal failure as conventional bombing (Gravel ed., IV:112–126).[12]

The incapacity of the United States depending on its own manpower and resources in Indochina was the dominant experience of the escalations of 1965–1967. Full of confidence, but forced by repeated frustrations to concoct yet more costly and dangerous escalations throughout this period, as the Pentagon Papers conclude: "The TET offensive showed that this progress in many ways had been illusory. The possibility of military victory had seemingly become remote and the cost had become too high in political and economic terms" (Gravel ed., IV: 604). Insofar as U.S. manpower was concerned, after the stunning Vietnamese offensive in February 1968 the Americans committed but 25,000 more men. But it spent far more on firepower, and the fiscal year beginning July 1968 was to prove the most costly of the war. More important, assorted escalation schemes designed during this early 1968 period became the basis of the subsequent Johnson-Nixon strategy as the war was energetically pushed into Cambodia and Laos. But of this, and the full reasons for the March 1968 stabilization of large manpower increments, the Pentagon Papers say nothing or far less than has been published elsewhere.[13]

It was in this context that the United States was to return to the chimera of relying on the Vietnamese commanded by Saigon fighting their own countrymen who had successfully defeated the infinitely more powerful Americans. While this notion is now called the Nixon Doctrine, it was in fact the oldest, least successful approach to the war since 1949.

After 1965 the United States certainly had not abandoned the principle of depending on Saigon's forces in some critical manner, at some vague future time. As U.S. men poured into Vietnam in 1965, the belief was that Saigon's morale would be bolstered and that the Americans would give it time to reform and enlarge its military arm. If that illusion appears to have been seriously held at first, as time went on and American forces grew it was thought that the certain, imminent destruction of the NLF main force units might give Saigon more leisure to prepare to mop up thereafter. The immediate military problem therefore became one for the United States, and although it was not difficult to add about 100,000 men to Saigon's units in the eighteen months after July 1965 (bringing it to 623,000 men), getting them to fight was quite another task (Gravel ed., II: 284, 511, 596; III:432, 462).

Illusions about building Saigon's military capacity or morale with greater U.S. presence were soon smashed, and a quite realistic assessment of reality predominated. In fact, new escalations were justified in internal debates precisely *because* Washington was aware of how decadent and fragile the Saigon political, economic, and military structure was at any given time. In July 1965 the Americans considered it on the verge of disaster. At best, key Americans thought the following year, an enfeebled Saigon would drag on unable to prosecute the war, particularly the "vital nonmilitary aspects of it" (Gravel ed., IV:87; see also IV:21). The contempt with which Washington held the Saigon regime at this time was total. "It is obviously true that the Vietnamese are not today ready for self-government," Henry Cabot Lodge commented at the middle of the year, "but if we are going to adopt the policy of turning every country that is unfit for self-government over to the communists, there won't be much of the world left" (Gravel ed., IV:99; see also IV:89). Security in the Saigon offices was so poor that it was given only one-hour notifications in advance of major escalations. But Saigon's economic and political weaknesses correctly worried the Americans the most. It knew the peasants regarded the Saigon officials as "tools of the local rich . . . excessively corrupt from top to bottom" (Gravel ed., IV:374; see also IV:103). And they retained an obsessive fear of inflation that could shatter the entire economy, increase military desertions, and ultimately become the decisive factor of the war (Gravel ed., IV:341–343, 369, 377–378). U.S. troop escalations were often calculated in terms of their economic impact on the local economy, a fact that inhibited yet further increases.

Nothing that occurred in the period before the Tet offensive altered this American vision. Saigon's army fought conventional warfare in a guerrilla context, it was poorly led, had poor morale, victimized the peasantry, and had low operational capabilities. This fact was recognized in many forms, and numerous schemes plotted for counteracting it. But they came to naught, because even as the United States intervened presumably to remove the main military burden from Saigon's backs, its presence convinced Saigon's generals that "Uncle Sam will do their job for them" (Gravel ed., IV:503; see also IV:396–399, 402–403, 439–440, 463). It was this unregenerate group of self-serving officers to whom the United States was to turn when its vast gamble was finally smashed during the Tet offensive. In the tortured weeks after that calamity for the Americans, the extent of Saigon's shocking weakness was candidly assessed, and the Pentagon officials used that fact as justification for demanding yet another 200,000 men for Indochina and even heavier reliance on American manpower (Gravel ed., IV:267, 562).

But further increases in U.S. manpower were effectively to end at this point, as Washington ignored the twenty-year history of the war on behalf of the hope that somehow, at some time, Vietnamese could be made to fight Vietnamese on behalf of a foreign imperialism. The trap was thereby fixed, taken up by the Nixon administration as its doctrine in Indochina and remained to suck the U.S. into further necessary escalations of firepower, expeditions into neighboring states, and a protracted involvement and expense in money and men to buy the time essential for "Vietnamization." In this sense, the Nixon administration became the inheritor and proponent of all the main themes and failures of the preceding two decades, accepting them as the inevitable basis of his own eventual demise. The story is as familiar as the outcome is certain. Only the timing is unknown, along with the number and magnitude of the American efforts that will be required so long as Washington, seeking to prevent the economically significant dominoes from falling, hopes to save a shred of credibility as to the efficacy of America's will, or continues its efforts to impose a U.S.-dominated military, political, and economic structure on South Vietnam. The alternative is to acknowledge the reality that the magnificent Vietnamese people has defeated the most powerful nation in modern times.

Though mediocre as history and partial as documentation, the Pentagon Papers provide a singularly overwhelming indictment of how devious, incorrigible, and beyond the pale of human values America's rulers were throughout this epic event in U.S. history. If they occasionally moderated the scale of violence it was purely as a result of a pragmatic realization that it failed to produce results desired, and they as freely vastly increased it when convinced they might also attain their ends.

But far more important is the main lesson that the entire Vietnam history has made painfully obvious to all who have either studied or experienced it. The United States did not at any time regard Vietnam itself as the main issue as much as it did the future of Southeast Asia and, beyond it, the relationship of Vietnam to revolution in modern times. Vietnam, almost by chance, became the main intersection of the frustrations and limits of U.S. power in the postwar period, the focus of the futile American effort to once and for all translate its seemingly overwhelming technological and economic might into a successful inhibition of local revolutionary forces, thereby aborting the larger pattern of world revolution and advancing America's own economic and strategic interests at one and the same time. This conclusion is inescapable from a study of the whole of postwar U.S. foreign policy and the "domino" and "credibility" theories as applied to Vietnam.

In this manner, the Vietnamese fought for their national salvation and self-determination, but also for that of the entire world as well. For just as Vietnam personified to the United States the consummate danger of the Left everywhere in the Third World in postwar history, the Vietnamese resistance embodies its triumph. For this reason, the Vietnamese have carried the burden in blood and advanced the cause of a larger international movement—diverse and pluralist as that movement may be. In their national struggle they have therefore also been the most profoundly internationalist, giving both time and freedom to Latin American forces that have infinitely less to fear from a mired United States. And by defining the limits of the American ruling class's power in a manner that may inhibit that elite's willingness to sacrifice the blood of its docile youth in future imperialist follies, they have done for the American people what they themselves could not accomplish. The monumental struggle which the Vietnamese undertook and won has thereby become one of the most profoundly important events to the future of progress in the remainder of this century.

Notes

1. For an example of how informative official military history, even written from a very conservative viewpoint, can be both as narrative and in subsuming the main currents, see Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest of China: A History of the Civil War, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, 1965).

2. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–1954* (New York, 1972), p. 72.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 554–562; Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* (Boston, 1969), chap. IV, for a history of the main events of the war; The Senator Gravel Edition, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam* [4 vols.] (Boston, 1971), I:31, 37, 62–63, 362–363, 450.

5. Kolko, *Limits of Power,* 683–684.

6. Kolko, *Limits of Power,* 686–687.

7. Kolko, *Limits of Power,* 698–700.

8. Kolko, *Limits of Power,* 685.

9. *Ibid.,* 686–687, 795.

10. Kolko, *Limits of Power,* 686.

11. More useful data appears in Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention* (New York, 1969); Eliot Janeway, *The Economics of Crisis* (New York, 1968), pp. 228, 280–281; Richard N. Gardner, *Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy* (New York, 1969), pp. xxii, lxvii; Gabriel Kolko, *The London Bulletin,* August 1969.

12. Lenny Siegel, "Vietnam's Electronic Battlefield," *Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram,* September-October 1971, pp. 1–8.

13. Lloyd Norman, "The '206,000 Plan'—The Inside Story," *Army,* April 1971, pp. 30–35; Hoopes, *Limits of Intervention, passim;* Kolko, *London Bulletin, passim;* and contemporary accounts in the *New York Times.*

2. Business Ideology and Foreign Policy: The National Security Council and Vietnam

by Richard B. Du Boff

> We know that the struggle between the Communist system and ourselves will go on. We know it will go on in economics, in productivity, in ideology, in Latin America and Africa, in the Middle East and Asia.
> —President John F. Kennedy, Remarks at Billings, Montana, September 25, 1963 (Gravel edition: II:829).

Publication of the Pentagon Papers offers us a once-in-a-lifetime glimpse into the inner councils of the decisionmaking apparatus which carries out the broad policies of America's ruling class. This, as I see it, is why President Nixon and his Attorney General, John Mitchell, fought so strenuously to block their publication in June 1971. After all, it would have been a relatively simple matter for Nixon, one of the great opportunists of American history, to have made considerable short-term political capital from the revelations in the Papers: most of the stunning instances of deceit, subterfuge, and cynical manipulation of the American public pertain to the Democratic administrations of 1961–1969, the Kennedy-Johnson years. Nixon's fight to prevent publication of this record must be interpreted as an act of class solidarity, an effort to protect the secrecy and close-circuited concentration of decisionmaking power in the upper reaches of the U.S. foreign policy establishment.

I. DECISIONMAKING AT THE TOP: THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS

Over the years the foreign policy of the United States has exhibited a remarkable degree of consistency. Since the last decade of the nineteenth century this nation's external relations have been characterized by a compulsive expansionism, principally though not exclusively commercial and financial; a marked propensity for military intervention abroad;[1] a distinct preference for allies of a conservative and counterrevolutionary stripe; and a well-known aggressiveness of purpose often expressed via the unilateral act, the *fait accompli.* Unless it is argued that the external behavior of the American power elite is essentially planless and just happens to fit this mold, artificially imposed upon it, such long-term unity of foreign policymaking reflects underlying economic interests. In other words, U.S. foreign policy serves the goals of an economic ruling class more than any other single component of American society.

Increasingly, this economic elite has become anchored in giant corporations and financial institutions. Corporate business is not merely another "interest group" in a complex social structure, but (as Gabriel Kolko describes it) "the

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keystone of power which defines the essential preconditions and functions of the larger American social order. . . . At every level of the administration of the American state, domestically and internationally, business serves as the fount of critical assumptions or goals and strategically placed personnel." [2]

These "critical assumptions" form the *ideology* that promotes the interests of the corporate business class—which in turn has supplied most of the personnel to man the major foreign policy posts in Washington.[3] This ideology, moreover, constitutes the vital link between economic interests and political actions. The reason is that the key inputs into foreign policy ideology are derived from the general outlook of the American business community, which regards the external world in terms of actual and potential threats to free-wheeling, open-ended profit maximization. Active policy goals, then, tend to sanction "stability" and "responsible" behavior on the part of foreign governments—just as the overriding requirement for corporations is a stable and highly favorable environment for their investment, production, and trade activities. While not *"each and every* act of political and military policy" can be tied to economic motivations,[4] the general thrust of American foreign policy over the past seven or eight decades comes from the "growth"-propelled search for control over major resource areas and the effort to keep an open door everywhere else for potential *future* expansion. The enlargement of capital values and market outlets is the first condition of capitalist production itself. The development of a *worldwide market* to assure the continuity of the expansion process is also part of the first condition of capitalist production—by no means can it be called extrinsic to the survival of the system.

The transmission belt that converts the structure of economic privilege into complementary political and military decisions is *ideology*. An expansionist market economy generates the ideological assumptions which provide the framework for political actions.[5] Furthermore, as noted, the individuals at the center of the foreign policy establishment have been drawn, in disproportionate numbers, from the ranks of the economic elite. Over the long run they—and their ideology—have shaped the governmental institutions and policy criteria through which decisions are made. (The National Security Council and its reports, as we shall see, were the chief instruments in establishing U.S. policy toward Indochina through 1954 and beyond.) Thus, even if the State and Defense departments, and the White House, were to come under the control of individuals only marginally connected with the corporate business community—as may be the case with some of the *arrivistes* at the helm of the Nixon administration—ideological implantation virtually guarantees that the overall formulation and execution of foreign policy will remain unchanged, short of a radical restructuring of the distribution of economic and political power in the outside society. As a high State Department official put it in 1969:

> The options the President exercises over foreign policy are bound to be limited. There is little possibility that the President can alter basic policy premises. Our conception of fundamental interests is non-controversial; the question is what you do to promote these interests.[6]

The critical elements of business ideology bear a direct relationship to American foreign policy. One element is that in international affairs, as in business, there are "rules of the game" that are violated only under pain of swift retribution. These rules represent political mechanisms which warrant continuation of the capitalist property system. The arrogant, moralizing mentality of a John

Foster Dulles, for instance, can be traced to training in and practice of international law, traditionally the vehicle for imposing a network of Western privileges on lesser breeds. More generally, the legalistic approach to international relations represents a self-interested extension of capitalist rules of the game to the world arena. There are some things one can do, others one cannot, and most of the taboos are, of course, things *you* would be tempted to do, not I. Property rights and the incomes produced by them (profits, dividends, rent, interest) cannot be interfered with; commercial and financial contracts, debts, mortgages, security provisions are "enforceable" in courts of law. "Free" markets for resources, labor power, and consumer goods embody certain norms of participant behavior, and these may not be tampered with. Nor, for that matter, is it permissible to abrogate or renege on treaty obligations, agreements, commitments, or "understandings" in international affairs, especially when they have been drawn up within the political and psychological field of gravity generated by the rules of the game.

A second element of foreign policy ideology is the absolute need for dynamic growth and expansion. The almost instinctive goal of an "activist" foreign policy (the way the State Department describes its own) is the building up of a structure of rewards and compulsions ("carrots and sticks") to assure key profit makers at home unimpeded access to external markets and resource areas and to furnish some insurance that future expansion into these areas will not be closed off by the rise of hostile or Communist governments. The expansion-minded, it follows, habitually project their own motivations to their adversaries. Even when American policymakers judged the Soviet Union and China to be assuming an essentially defensive posture in international affairs, they accused them of, and at times subjectively believed them to be, practicing "aggressive expansionism" throughout the world.[7] The growth imperative, like others in American society, has been projected outward, externalized. For the past twenty-five years the United States has been mobilizing against Russians and Chinese, Cubans and Vietnamese. Communism appears to be a constituent which the U.S. corporate economy needs in order to keep functioning.

The third significant input into foreign policy ideology, one which seems to have a particular hold on the intellectuals selected out from academic, military, and political careers to serve in the policymaking apparatus, is the "bad example" syndrome. Means must be devised to discourage the spread of revolutions or serious social and economic reforms that might set bad examples for other nations. This input explains why the central characters of the Pentagon Papers place so much credence in the "domino theory" first stated in public by President Eisenhower in his press conference of April 7, 1954 (Gravel ed., I:597), but inherent in Washington's thinking about Indochina since mid-1947, when Secretary of State George C. Marshall cabled his Ambassador to France that sympathy for the Vietnamese in their struggle against French colonialism should be kept within bounds:

> Signs [of] development [of] anti-Western Asiatic consciousness [are] already multiplying. . . . Unanimity [of] support for Vietnamese among other Asiatic countries [is] very striking, even leading to moves Burma, India, and Malaya send volunteer forces their assistance. Vietnam cause proving rallying-cry for all anti-Western forces and playing in hands Communists all areas. We fear continuation conflict may jeopardize position all Western democratic powers in Southern Asia and lead to very eventualities of which we most apprehensive.[8]

It is true that the simplistic, almost physical version of "falling dominoes" put forward in 1954 by Eisenhower, a version which postulated a Communist "takeover" in one country leading automatically to the loss of one country after another in geographical order from the original one, was ridiculed practically from the start and became a favorite target for American liberals in the late 1950s and 1960s. But, as was frequently the case with Eisenhower, awkward rhetoric and faulty grammar obscured a deeper reality understood by the U.S. power structure. Although a Communist or leftist triumph might not bring about immediate collapse in adjacent countries, it would signify a dangerous historical and psychological precedent. The "losses" of Russia in 1917, China in 1949, and Cuba in 1959 supplied proof that peoples formerly colonized or dominated by Western capitalism could indeed create new socioeconomic institutions to deal with structural problems of backwardness, poverty, and stagnation, provided they could take up the revolutionary option and wield effective control over their own resources. The "domino theory" has a grimly convincing ring to it when it symbolizes this ominous drift of history. Under these circumstances President Kennedy emphatically affirmed his own faith in the domino theory two months before his death: ". . . I believe it. I believe . . . if South Vietnam went, it would not only give them an improved geographic position for a guerrilla assault on Malaya but would also give the impression that the wave of the future in Southeast Asia was China and the Communists. So I believe it" (Gravel ed., II:828). In June 1964 when Lyndon Johnson asked the basic question "Would the rest of Southeast Asia necessarily fall if Laos and South Vietnam came under North Vietnamese control?" neither he nor his close advisers paid any heed to the response from the CIA Board of National Estimates: "With the possible exception of Cambodia, it is likely that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to communism as a result of the fall of Laos and South Vietnam." Apparently they too rejected the simplistic version of "falling dominoes" in favor of the Board's estimate that the loss of South Vietnam and Laos "would be profoundly damaging to the U.S. position in the Far East" because of its impact on America's prestige (Gravel ed., III:127, 178). The CIA Board cautioned that, if South Vietnam "went," the Peking leadership would be able to justify its revolutionary policies with demonstrated success in Indochina.

Time and again this prospect of a "successful" revolutionary option is considered to be the greatest menace to our own "prestige," "reputation," and "credibility," words which recur throughout the Papers. Thus, Assistant Secretary of Defense John T. McNaughton was insisting in the fall of 1964 that were we to fail in Vietnam, that failure must be made "clear to the world" as having been "due to special local factors . . . that do not apply to other nations" and that "*cannot be generalized* beyond South Vietnam" (Gravel ed., III:657, 583; McNaughton's emphasis. See also his "good doctor" prescription for maintaining America's global reputation [Gravel ed., III:559, 582, 604] and William P. Bundy's advice that "stronger action" by the United States would enhance our image to Asians even if South Vietnam fell [Gravel ed., III:684–686]).

II. THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND VIETNAM

In the aftermath of the Second World War the United States faced a new array of politico-military problems brought on by the cold war, reduced defense budgets, and a more complex military establishment in which air power was beginning to play an increasingly attractive and politically independent role. The response of the civilian ruling class came in the form of the National Security Act of (July) 1947, which created a single, unified military establishment, authorized a Secretary of Defense to oversee it, and established the National Security Council (NSC) as an advisory body to the President to help in "voluntary coordination" of policy. "The Secretary of Defense was not to be the chief architect of defense policy"—this was now placed more firmly than ever under the control of civilians outside the Pentagon.[9]

For this reason, the NSC was set up, and for this reason too its precise function was left obscure. Statutory membership comprises the President and Vice-President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Director of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency are statutory *advisers* to the Council (not members). Beyond that, the President may select his own NSC counselors from among other government officials, or he may appoint private citizens as informal advisers or consultants.[10] The effect of this act was to strengthen the bond between the formal policymaking apparatus culminating in the Presidency and the corporate-business-banking sector of the external society.

Accordingly, the 1947 act opened up a pipeline between the summit of state power and the civilian ruling elites, both in and out of government. While it created flexible machinery allowing different Presidents to use NSC in different ways, it has underscored the role of the civilian economic elite in drafting military and political strategy, and it demonstrates the importance of upper-class "outsiders" in molding foreign policy.[11] Foundation experts (often from the Council on Foreign Relations) and councils of "wise men" have frequently been shuttled in and out of the informal, committee-type NSC structure, particularly for major decisions or special crisis management.

Thanks in good part to NSC, both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were "able to follow military policies which when inaugurated had little support from the people," because "the appropriate agencies of the government, not public opinion, had the final word," according to Professor Samuel Huntington. In 1953, Huntington reports further, the NSC brought in "yet another group of six consultants . . . and James Black, president of Pacific Gas & Electric Company, one of the 'Seven Wise Men' [who had worked on an earlier NSC project]" to resolve the continental defense problems posed by the Soviets' acquisition of the hydrogen bomb.[12] In March 1968, in the wake of the National Liberation Front's Tet Offensive in South Vietnam, it was an informal "Senior Advisory Group on Vietnam" that prevailed upon Lyndon Johnson to put a ceiling on the resources allocated to the Vietnam war, lest price inflation and the balance of payments deficit lurch completely out of control.[13] These advisers, some of them well-known "hawks" and most having close ties to Wall Street and other corporate institutions, forcefully pointed out the dangers to the American economy and its overseas interests from continued increases in Vietnam spending. The President reluctantly stopped escalating the conflict (Gravel ed., IV:266–276).

This kind of NSC influence and control is evident in America's involvement in Indochina, above all through 1954 when hard, hawkish decisions were made that set the stage for later military buildups and eventual escalation. During this period, furthermore, the executive secretaries of the NSC were Sidney Souers, a successful businessman from St. Louis, and James S. Lay, Jr., a former utility company official; Eisenhower's special assistant for NSC affairs was Boston banker Robert Cutler; and among NSC advisers were corporation lawyers, bankers, industrialists.[14] The Pentagon Papers contain every critical NSC document relating to the Vietnam war—as the continuous references to them in other documents (cables, telegrams, reports from other agencies) make clear. And these NSC materials are surely the reason why the Pentagon Papers historians claim that their "collection [of appended documents] represents the internal commitment of the U.S. as expressed in classified documents circulated at the highest levels in the Government." [15]

Through the Truman and Eisenhower administrations the major NSC documents constitute what I would call "paradigm statements." They evolve out of prior periods of policy disarray, doubt, conflict, infighting, or plain indecision. Slowly but surely—and sometimes, under pressing crisis, swiftly—this divided counsel gives way to consensus, expressed by an NSC position paper. Henceforth this "paradigm statement" serves as clearly established policy. It is referred to and quoted constantly thereafter. As a set of guidelines it can be modified and amended. Eventually, it may even be replaced when it has outlived its usefulness or when the decisionmaking structure decides, perhaps, that one segment of it should now be more strongly emphasized at the expense of another.

In discussing these NSC paradigm statements, I shall cite only those through the end of 1954 when, to all intents and purposes, U.S. policy for Indochina was cast for the next two decades: South Vietnam was held to be vital for American security, its future was not to be subject to negotiation of any sort, and it had to be defended by military action—including U.S. intervention—if need be.

The key NSC paradigm statements on Indochina through 1954:

1. *NSC 48/1, 23 December 1949* (Gravel ed., I:82)[16]

This was the first policy statement on Indochina, capping three years of growing doubts over French diplomatic and military policy and fears about Ho Chi Minh's "clear record as agent [of] international communism," as Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson warned the U.S. Consul in Saigon in December 1946 (Gravel ed., I:20). Two months later Secretary of State George C. Marshall expressed "increasing concern over situation as it is developing in Indochina"; the United States could "not lose sight [of] fact that Ho Chi Minh has direct Communist connections . . . philosophy and political organizations emanating from and controlled by Kremlin." [17] NSC 48/1 also embodied the "domino theory," first voiced by Marshall in May 1947 (as noted earlier) and repeated in 1949 by Under Secretary of State James Webb: "If COMMIES gain control IC [Indochina], THAI and rest SEA will be imperiled." [18] In March 1949 George M. Abbott, U.S. Consul General in Saigon, told Washington that a French withdrawal from Vietnam would leave "a Communist-controlled government in a strategic area of Southeast Asia," and Secretary of State Acheson was soon informing his Consul General in Hanoi that "In light Ho's known background, no other assumption possible but that he outright Commie. . . ." [19]

NSC 48/1 established a deep American concern over developing events in Southeast Asia, particularly in view of the disintegration of the Nationalist armies in China: "the extension of communist authority in China represents a grievous political defeat for us . . . If Southeast Asia is also swept by communism, we shall have suffered a major political rout the repercussions of which will be felt throughout the rest of the world, especially in the Middle East and in a then critically exposed Australia" (Gravel ed., I:82).

But in synthesizing earlier concerns over Indochina and world communism, NSC 48/1 took a discrete step upward, into a comprehensive review of the *political economy* of the Far East. Topmost among its considerations was the precarious position of Japan, which obviously had to be retained in the free world, to anchor the Pacific flank of the international capitalist system. "A middle of the road regime in Japan . . . would in the long-run prove more reliable as an ally of the United States than would an extreme right-wing totalitarian government." This would be the best way for pro-American elements "to exercise their influence over government policy and to mold public opinion." [20] Japan was seen as the hub of an integrated Asian economy—a free market economy whose various parts would be linked together through complementary trading patterns, investment and capital goods flows, and technical and financial aid programs:

> Asia is a source of numerous raw materials, principally tin and natural rubber, which are of strategic importance to the United States, although the United States could, as in World War II, rely on other sources if necessary. . . .
>
> The United States has an interest in the attainment by the free peoples of Asia of that degree of economic recovery and development needed as a foundation for social and political stability. This interest stems from the principle that a viable economy is essential to the survival of independent states. In the two major non-Communist countries of this area, India and Japan, U.S. aid . . . is averting a deterioration in economic conditions that would otherwise threaten political stability. While scrupulously avoiding assumption of responsibility for raising Asiatic living standards, it is to the U.S. interest to promote the ability of these countries to maintain . . . the economic conditions prerequisite to political stability. Japan can only maintain its present living standard on a self-supporting basis if it is able to secure a greater proportion of its needed food and raw material (principally cotton) imports from the Asiatic area, in which its natural markets lie, rather than from the U.S., in which its export market is small. In view of the desirability of avoiding preponderant dependence on Chinese sources, and the limited availability of supplies from prewar sources in Korea and Formosa, this will require a considerable increase in Southern Asiatic food and raw material exports. . . . One major prerequisite to such an increase is the restoration of political stability in the food exporting countries of Burma and Indo China. . . . Another major prerequisite is expanded agricultural development in the stable Southern Asiatic countries in which such development would be economic: India, Pakistan—which exports wheat and cotton, Thailand—which exports rice, and Ceylon—whose sizable rice imports reduce the availability of Asiatic foodstuffs to India and Japan. Japanese and Indian food requirements, and Japanese cotton requirements, could be met if certain projected irrigation, reclamation, and transportation projects were executed. . . .
>
> These projects will probably require . . . some external technical aid, some limited external financial aid. . . . External technical aid should be made available under the Point IV program. The external financial aid required is of such a limited character that it can probably be adequately provided by the International Bank and the Export-Import Bank. . . .
>
> Through increased sales of rice, wheat, and cotton, Thailand and Pakistan could most economically secure the imports of capital and consumer goods to develop and diversify their economies. . . .
>
> Our interest in a viable economy in the non-Communist countries of Asia would be advanced by increased trade among such countries. Japanese and Indian industrial revival and development can contribute to enlarged intraregional trade relations which suffered a set-back because of the economic

> vacuum resulting from the defeat of Japan . . . and the interference and restrictions arising from extensive governmental controls. Given a favorable and secure atmosphere—plus adequate freedom to individual traders, readily available working capital, suitable commercial agreements establishing conditions favorable to commerce and navigation and general assistance in the promotion of trade—it is expected that a substantial increase in intra-Asia trade can occur.[21]

It will be noted that the aim was not general economic and social betterment for Asian masses—scrupulous avoidance of that responsibility was recommended, along with suitably low aid levels. NSC 48/1 looked upon Indochina as essential to a political economy of "stability" that would simply allow Japan in the Pacific (and India in South Asia) to remain "non-Communist."

2. *NSC 64, 27 February 1950* (Gravel ed., I:83, 186–187, 361–362)

Like NSC 48/1, this document preceded the outbreak of war in Korea. Already it was deemed necessary "to protect U.S. security interests in Indochina . . . and to prevent the expansion of Communist aggression in that area." The domino theory was reiterated.

3. *NSC 68, April 1950*

Still top secret, this important document is not found in the Pentagon Papers. Most scholars consider it a cold war turning point, "a document which recommended a substantial increase in expenditures on national security in a variety of ways at a time when further reductions in defense expenditures were under serious consideration." [22] It should be included in any survey of Indochina, because it brings out the broad, strategic considerations behind American foreign policy at this point in time, as well as the kinds of responses U.S. leaders were contemplating in "trouble spots" all over the world. It grew out of a comprehensive assessment of U.S. foreign policy carried out by a joint State–Defense Department study group headed by Paul Nitze (who would later play an important role in the Kennedy administration), a partner in the investment banking house of Dillon, Read, which was also the home base of James Forrestal, Ferdinand Eberstadt, and C. Douglas Dillon, all key figures in postwar foreign policy-making. Calling for wholesale U.S. rearmament before the Korean War, NSC 68 was formulated amidst rising anguish over Vietnam, China (the Communists had triumphed the previous October), and Russia's first atomic bomb (detonated in August 1949, three years ahead of American intelligence estimates). It meant "virtual abandonment by the United States of trying to distinguish between national and global security," so that "much of what was done in the Korean buildup would have been done anyway . . . *the Korean war remained only a part of the larger picture of the national strategy*. For most people who knew anything about it, NSC–68 represented that larger picture." [23]

At this juncture too, in May 1950, the United States began its fateful program of direct economic and military aid to French forces in Indochina (Gravel ed., I:41–42, 370).

4. *NSC 48/5, May 17, 1951* [24]

Desirable now was "development of power relationships in Asia which will make it impossible for any nation or alliance to threaten the security of the

United States *from that area.*" Continued emphasis was placed on the necessity for Japan "contributing to the security and stability of the Far East."

5. *NSC 124/1, February 13, 1952* (Gravel ed., I:375–381)

"Indochina is of far greater strategic importance than Korea . . . [and] critical to U.S. security interests." "The fall of Southeast Asia would underline the apparent economic advantages to Japan of association with the communist-dominated Asian sphere." Furthermore:

> Exclusion of Japan from trade with Southeast Asia would seriously affect the Japanese economy, and increase Japan's dependence on United States aid. In the long run the loss of Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to the Soviet Bloc.
>
> Southeast Asia . . . is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin. Access to these materials by the Western Powers and their denial to the Soviet bloc is important at all times . . . [rice surpluses and petroleum are also cited in this respect].
>
> Communist domination of mainland Southeast Asia would place unfriendly forces astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Western Pacific and India and the Near East.

6. *NSC 124/2, June 25, 1952* (Gravel ed., I: 384–390)

This document repeated the heavy geopolitical-economy articulation of NSC 124/1 and added a statement of what the Pentagon Papers historians call "the 'domino principle' in its purest form" (Gravel ed., I:83–84). These historians ignore, however, another highly significant step toward direct American involvement in Indochina: a provision that if French energies in pursuing the war begin to flag, the United States should, first, "oppose a French withdrawal," and then "consider taking unilateral action."

7. *Progress Report on NSC 124/2, August 5, 1953*
(Gravel ed., I:405–410)

France's lack of success in Indochina was traced largely to failure "to frustrate nationalist appeal of the Viet Minh" and "to plan and execute aggressive military operations." "In general," the official historians write of this period, "the U.S. sought to convince the French that military victory was the only guarantee of diplomatic success" (Gravel ed., I:96). French Prime Minister Joseph Laniel, undoubtedly under intense pressure from Washington, was promising the Americans that he could "keep his government's support without going further in [the] direction of negotiations. . . ." [25]

8. *NSC 5405, January 16, 1954* (Gravel ed., I:434–443).

As French armed forces were being harder pressed by the Viet Minh, little doubt remained about the importance of Indochina: "Communist domination, by whatever means, of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests." Thus, the United States should assist France in fashioning an aggressive military program "to eliminate organized Viet Minh forces by mid-1955." Again, stress was placed on "the interrelation of the countries of the area," and the "serious economic consequences" stemming from the losses of natural rubber, tin, petroleum, and other strategically important resources, including "the rice exports of Burma, Indochina and Thailand . . . , of considerable significance to Japan and India." Echoing NSC 124/1, this paper went on to warn that

> The loss of Southeast Asia would have serious economic consequences for many nations of the free world. . . . [This] could result in such economic and political pressures in Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to communism.

Events now unfolded at a quicker pace, as the specter of French military defeat loomed at Dienbienphu (it materialized on May 7, 1954). On March 17, 1954, an NSC Memorandum asserted that "The French desire for peace in Indochina almost at any cost represents our greatest vulnerability in the Geneva talks," scheduled to begin on April 26 (Gravel ed., I:452). On April 5, as debate was heating up in Washington over whether U.S. forces should be openly committed to combat to aid the weakening French, an NSC Action Paper foresaw a "possibility that a trend in the direction of the loss of Indochina to Communist control may become irreversible over the next year in the absence of greater U.S. participation" (Gravel ed., I:463). In addition, a Special (Presidential) Committee for review of NSC 5405 decided that, as a statement of policy, NSC 5405 "remains valid," and that, in keeping with the strategic considerations it outlined, "defeat of the Viet Minh in Indo-China is essential if the spread of Communist influence in Southeast Asia is to be halted." Its final recommendation: *"It be U.S. policy to accept nothing short of a military victory in Indo-China"* (Gravel ed., I:472–474; emphasis added).

In public too, it is interesting to note, the Eisenhower administration was repeating the policy rationales of its NSC deliberations. In an address before the Overseas Press Club in New York on March 29, 1954, Secretary of State Dulles described the importance of Indochina. Among other factors, Dulles claimed, "Southeast Asia is the so-called 'rice bowl' which helps to feed the densely populated region that extends from India to Japan. It is rich in many raw materials, such as tin, oil, rubber, and iron ore. It offers industrial Japan potentially important markets and sources of raw materials." Dulles continued:

> The area has great strategic value. Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Pacific and South Asia. It has major naval and air bases (Gravel ed., I:594–595).

These sentences came almost verbatim from NSC 124/1. They were again trotted out on April 11 by Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith in a television interview (Gravel ed., I:598).

9. *NSC 5421, June 1, 1954* [26]

This publication was a collection of agency reports "prepared on the assumption that U.S. armed forces intervene in the conflict in Indochina. . . ."

10. *NSC 5429/2, August 20, 1954*[27]

The French defeat at Dienbienphu and the "unfavorable" nature of the Geneva Accords of July 21, 1954, have led to "loss of prestige in Asia suffered by the U.S. as a backer of the French and the Bao Dai Government." As a result "U.S. prestige will inescapably be associated with subsequent developments in Southeast Asia." It should be America's goal, then, "to maintain and support friendly non-Communist governments in Cambodia and Laos, to maintain a friendly non-Communist South Vietnam, and to prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections."

11. *NSC 5429/5, December 22, 1954*[28]

Washington's resolve was hardening (Gravel ed., I:214–221). Military action was now being discussed as a concrete possibility, "subject to prior submission to and approval by the Congress unless the emergency is deemed by the President to be so great that immediate action is necessary. . . ." This clause was soon to be invoked as the basis of "U.S. policy in the event of a renewal of hostilities by the Communists" after the miscarriage of the all-Vietnam elections called for in the Geneva Accords.[29]

Finally, as the official historians also appear to believe (Gravel ed., I:121), the old American idea of "rollback" resurfaced:

> While there is now no reason to anticipate an early collapse of the [Chinese Communist] regime nor any means of seeing when one might occur, inherently such regimes have elements of rigidity and instability which sometimes produce crises. We should be ready to exploit any opportunities which might occur as a result of inherent internal weaknesses. . . . Reduction of Chinese Communist power and prestige, or securing by reorientation a Government on the mainland of China whose objectives do not conflict with the vital interests of the United States [should now be U.S. policy].[30]

The policymaking role of NSC was somewhat de-emphasized during the Kennedy-Johnson years. NSC became more an appendage of the White House foreign policy staff, and McGeorge Bundy was its manager. Still, "National Security Action Memoranda" were the chosen means for denoting major policy steps and setting them up as precedents "to guide national policy" (Gravel ed., III:9). As far as Indochina decisions were concerned, the slight change in policymaking form implied no change in content. What is striking about the NSAM documents for the Kennedy administration is that the "commitment" to South Vietnam was no longer questioned.[31] The NSAMs show total programmatic continuity and deal almost exclusively with force levels, tactics, the efficiency and durability of the Diem Government, and issues raised by "wars of national liberation" and counterinsurgency. (See, for example, NSAM 52 and NSAM 124: Gravel ed., II:642–643 and 660–661.) NSC papers of the 1950s were also alluded to, though not always explicitly. In a speech before the Economic Club of Detroit in April 1963, Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson used the same language from NSC 124/1—then eleven years old—as Dulles and Smith had in 1954 (Gravel ed., II:817). Two years later before the same forum Deputy Under Secretary Leonard Unger followed suit (Gravel ed., III:731).

As the situation in South Vietnam underwent progressive deterioration in the early 1960s the U.S. military intervention envisioned in 1954 appeared increasingly necessary. The first major move in that direction came in April and May of 1961, with John F. Kennedy's decision to dispatch 400 U.S. special forces soldiers and 100 other military advisers to the Diem government and to begin a campaign of covert military operations against North Vietnam (Gravel ed., II:38–55, 637–643). In November 1961 the Kennedy administration took another step forward, sharply expanding the U.S. military mission and putting American troops in combat-support roles (Gravel ed., II:102–120). At the time of Kennedy's assassination, 16,000 U.S. troops were stationed in South Vietnam, as opposed to 685 when he took office. In December 1963 Defense Secretary McNamara sounded the alarm over impending Communist victory in South Vietnam or neutralization of that country (Gravel ed., III:494–496). NSAM 273, November 26, 1963, and NSAM 288, March 17, 1964, reaffirmed "the central object of the United States in South Vietnam . . . to win the contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy" (Gravel ed., III: 7–9, 50–58, 496–500). Three days after NSAM 288, President Johnson instructed his Ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, "that your mission is precisely for the purpose of knocking down the idea of neutralization wherever it rears its ugly head . . . nothing is more important than to stop neutralist talk wherever we can by whatever means we can" (Gravel ed., III:511).

All along the road to escalation, to be sure, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson expressed doubts. But never could they or their advisers bring themselves to break with the momentum and sheer force of six to ten years of solid policy commitments. What chief executive could have done that? Only one with an altogether different outlook upon the flow of world history and America's role in that historical process. Neither JFK nor LBJ was that man. Nor is it likely that any such man could have gained either the Democratic or Republican Presidential nomination, let alone the Presidency, under the prevailing political structure in the United States and the larger economic interests and business ideology it represents.

III. CONCLUSION

From the NSC documents of 1949–1954, and beyond, emerge four themes in the making of U.S. policy toward Indochina.

1. Southeast Asia was viewed as an essential part of a Pacific rimlands political economy composed of several interdependent units and revolving about Japan as a nucleus.[32]
2. Were any part of this political economy to "fall" or to opt out of the free (enterprise) world, the repercussions would be felt throughout the area, particularly in Japan, which had to have access to a wide hinterland for economic growth and expansion.[33]
3. "Loss" of any of Indochina would have further grave domino effects, of a psychological and political nature, on America's power as a guarantor of "order" and "stability."
4. No negotiations whatever were to be considered with Communists over the future of Southeast Asia.

A number of corollaries followed from such policy axioms. For instance, loss of territory to the Communists in itself constituted a U.S. defeat even if accompanied by diplomatic success (Gravel ed., I:176–178). Thus, "rollback" of Communist power, acknowledged to be an exceedingly dangerous idea, was nonetheless a policy option to be held in reserve should the opportunity arise. In his April 7, 1954, press conference President Eisenhower claimed that a Viet Minh victory in Southeast Asia "takes away, in its economic aspects, that region that Japan must have as a trading area or . . . have only one place in the world to go—that is, toward the Communist areas in order to live" (Gravel ed., I:597). In a *New York Times* interview thirteen years later (December 24, 1967) the former President, probably recalling 1953–1954 NSC discussions and policy papers, adduced the same dangers to Japan and added: "Probably the less said about that right now the better, but the plain fact is that no prosperous free society based on the private enterprise system can expect to exist indefinitely alongside a sprawling police state like Communist China and its satellites." This hinted that ultimately we might have to extirpate communism in Asia in order to make Japan and other "free" countries secure.

America's cold war policymakers have shared an amazingly expansive concept of U.S. "national security." Can it be accidental that this concept is a mirror image of the feverish growth dynamic of corporate business? Or is it, as Professor Robert Tucker argues in dismissing the primacy of economic factors behind American foreign policy, that economic statements like the ones I quote above are made by U.S. leaders "largely to elicit support for a policy that is pursued primarily for quite different reasons"?[34]

Tucker is not altogether incorrect. Immediate policy decisions often have little to do with demonstrable economic benefits. It would be pure idealism to reduce North American or Western European politics to the rational interests of "capitalism" in the abstract. The process by which economic forces are *ultimately determinant* is a complex one in which in specific situations the decisive factors may well be political, psychological, or social. But several points must be kept in mind with respect to *American* foreign policy, and its Indochina disaster.

In the first place, the economic declarations contained in the Pentagon Papers were not intended as rhetoric for public consumption. The NSC documents in particular were internal working papers "for eyes only"—official eyes. It should be clearly stated, secondly, what noneconomic purposes—what "quite different reasons"—underlie U.S. foreign policy. Here, Tucker is consistent. He grants that "America's universalism has been throughout indistinguishable from America's expansionism. In the period that has followed the initial years of the cold war, it is the expansionist interest that has become increasingly dominant."[35] The *reason* for this expansionism, Tucker alleges, is an "exaggerated" sense of security, due to "the fear arising simply from the loss of preponderance itself." U.S. policymakers, possessing "inordinate power," will be "ready to use it if only in order to rule over others," just as powerful men have done throughout history.[36]

But can Tucker show—can anyone?—that such American foreign policy decisions have ever been made on grounds recognizably injurious to the dominant economic power centers? The "quite different reasons" usually turn out to be providentially consistent with the palpable economic interests of the corporate upper class who—it must be repeated—have occupied the key foreign policy posts in Washington in the present century.[37]

The fact is that America's policymakers exercise both functions at once: they represent the economic elite *and* the national interest as traditionally understood in *Machtpolitik* terms. Bound up in a seamless web relationship, these two functions cannot be segregated by any neat boundary. To do so would be dialectically meaningless. The economic blazes paths for the political and the military (as in Latin America), and state power is utilized in ways that rarely clash with possibilities for external economic expansion (as in Asia). While Marxists talk about "unity of theory and practice," capitalists achieve it, and on an international plane. The interests of the giant U.S. corporations and banks, as their executives never cease to proclaim in their own annual reports and elsewhere, are *international.* Why should they not fear "international communism"? Capitalism itself was the very first global system. Long before communism existed. Great Britain, the pioneer industrial nation, was trading, investing, banking abroad and leading the way toward creation of a true international market economy after 1850. From this moment any basic threat to these institutional arrangements had to be "international," almost by definition.

America's foreign policymakers do have legitimate fears. And they project them within the channels of statecraft and diplomacy which have been an inherent element of the foreign affairs bureaucracies of all great powers since Louis XIV's France. Thus, they enthusiastically respond to challenges of strategic necessity and national interest. Doing so reinforces the self-esteem that elites need to rationalize their own exalted positions in the social hierarchy. They are important men because they are dealing with transcendentally important matters. In their own minds they must satisfy themselves that they are promoting "national security," "international stability," [38] "world justice," all issues loftily above mundane considerations like (as Joseph Schumpeter used to ask) "who stands to gain?" The official mentality is shaped by the policymakers' sober consciousness of themselves as a deserving political elite, men endowed with all the advantages of (what passes for) a cultivated upbringing. "Trained for public service and somewhat 'cosmopolitan' in outlook, it regards itself as uniquely qualified for leadership, especially in foreign affairs." [39] It believes itself to be a vanguard, willing to accept the "terrible responsibilities" and risks of world power, from which many of its less intrepid countrymen shrink. What we see operating here is the psychological counterpart of socioeconomic privilege.

It is no surprise that some of these powerful men—the Nixons, Rusks, McNamaras—become true believers in the "Communist conspiracy." This too, however, serves the rhetoric of self-justification required to organize society and culture along corporate, neocapitalist lines. For if much of America's ruling class is really convinced that communism and socialism are deadly, subversive, aggressive, externally directed menaces, we must remember not only that these beliefs are an integral part of a process of internal justification, not only that in broad historical terms the proposition harbors a grain of truth, but that selective belief is a result of class breeding and class philosophy. U.S. leaders have been conditioned to oppose the Left all around the world because revolutionary aspirations and movements objectively threaten the framework of their own social system, the framework within which they formulate policy and influence the fate of millions of people inside their own country and out. That this power is exercised irresponsibly and immorally is something that the Left has long believed. The Pentagon Papers now provide proof.

Notes

1. See the lists of instances of the use of U.S. armed forces abroad, inserted in the *Congressional Record* by Sen. Barry Goldwater, 117 (April 26, 1971), S5636–47 and Sen. Everett Dirksen, 115 (June 23, 1969), S16839–44.

2. Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 9, 26.

3. Kolko, *Roots,* ch. 1; G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America?* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), chs. 2 and 3, and "Who Made American Foreign policy, 1945–1963?" in David Horowitz, ed., *Corporations and the Cold War* (New York: Monthly Review, 1969), reprinted in Domhoff's *The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America* (New York: Random House, 1970), ch. 5.

4. Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism* (New York: Monthly Review, 1969), 13.

5. See Arthur MacEwan, "Capitalist Expansion, Ideology, and Intervention," in Richard C. Edwards *et al., The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

6. "Students Assail Defense System," *New York Times,* October 12, 1969.

7. See Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1966* (New York: Wiley, 1967), chs. 1–4; and William A. Williams, "The Cold War Revisionists," *The Nation,* 205 (November 13, 1967). In the post–World War II period, according to Professor Samuel P. Huntington, "the dominant feature of international politics . . . was the expansion of the power of the United States. A critical feature of this expansion was the extension of American power into the vacuums that were left after the decline of the European influence in Asia, Africa, and even Latin America. . . . Americans devoted much attention to the expansion of Communism (which, in fact, expanded very little after 1949), and in the process they tended to ignore the expansion of the United States influence and presence throughout much of the world." "Political Development and the Decline of the American System of World Order," *Daedalus,* 96 (Summer 1967), 927.

8. Telegram to U.S. Embassy in Paris, May 13, 1947, in *United States–Vietnam Relations 1945-1967. Study Prepared by the Department of Defense* (Washington: Printed for the use of the House Committee on Armed Services, 1971), Book 8, 100–102. This is the U.S. Government edition of the Pentagon Papers, and will hereafter be cited as USG ed.

9. Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 228, 231; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 114–115, 378–81; Kolko, *Roots,* 37–47.

10. See Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 353–357, 227–232.

11. See Domhoff, "Who Made American Foreign Policy?" 41–46, reprinted in *The Higher Circles,* 128–135.

12. Huntington, *The Common Defense,* 241, 333–334.

13. See Townsend Hoopes (Under Secretary of the Air Force at the time), *The Limits of Intervention* (New York: McKay, 1969), ch. 10, published in an earlier version in *The Atlantic,* 224 (October 1969). Hoopes's account is in close agreement with that of the *New York Times* special report of March 7, 1969.

14. See the references in note 11, as well as Hoopes, *Limits of Intervention,* 2–5.

15. Foreword to Books 8 and 9 of USG ed.

16. The complete document can be found in USG ed., Book 8, 225–272, which includes NSC 48/2, appended on 30 December 1949.

17. USG ed., Book 8, 98–99; Telegram to U.S. Embassy in Paris, February 3, 1947.

18. *Ibid.,* 219–222; Cable to U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, 20 June 1949.

19. *Ibid.,* 155–157, 196; Memo on Indochina, March 31, 1949, and cable to U.S. Consul in Hanoi, May 20, 1949.

20. *Ibid.,* 241.

21. *Ibid.,* 256–261.

22. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 347.

23. Cabell Phillips, *The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 305-308. On NSC 68, see also Huntington, *The Common Defense,* 47–53 and 220–221.

24. USG ed., Book 8, 425–445. The quotation is from 428, with emphasis added.

25. USG ed., Book 9, 202; Cable from Paris to Secretary of State, November 30, 1953.

26. *Ibid.,* 510–529.

27. USG ed., Book 10, 731–741.

28. *Ibid.*, 835–852.

29. Cited, for instance, on June 13, 1955 (*ibid.*, 984). On Dulles's scheme for "legally" preventing elections, see his April 6, 1955, cable to Saigon, *ibid.*, 892–893. On the failure to hold the elections called for in the Geneva Accords, see I, 182–183, 208–209, 239–241.

30. USG ed., Book 10, 837, 839. See also the CIA Special Estimate of December 15, 1953, I, 432 (8c).

31. Except by Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith, who got nowhere. See II, 121–125, 147, 669–672.

32. For recent surveys, see Peter Wiley, "Vietnam and the Pacific Rim Strategy," *Leviathan,* 1 (June 1969) and Carl Oglesby and R. Shaull, *Containment and Change* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), ch. 5, esp. 121–130. Professor Robert W. Tucker finds this interpretation of U.S. policy in the Far East "difficult to take seriously." American leaders have expressed such views, Tucker admits, but "at best . . . citation of these views proves no more than conviction, and a mistaken conviction at that." *The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 116–117. One might think that "conviction," even if mistaken, provides a rather reliable guide to the formulation and execution of policy.

33. Revival of Japan, naturally, has posed another kind of dilemma for the United States: that of a tough competitor in the markets of the world. On the contradictions of U.S. policy toward Japan, see Walter LaFeber, "Our Illusory Affair with Japan," *The Nation,* 206 (March 11, 1968) and Tom Engelhardt and Jim Peck, "Japan: Rising Sun in the Pacific," *Ramparts,* 10 (January 1972).

34. Tucker, *The Radical Left,* 61. This book, despite its weaknesses, is the most astute and fair-minded critique of the radical view of U.S. foreign policy. Most radicals will benefit from reading it.

35. *Ibid.*, 108.

36. *Ibid.*, 69, 105, 151.

37. Tucker nowhere takes into account the evidence on this point in Kolko and Domhoff (see notes 3 and 11).

38. But see the NSC documents for the kind of "stability" the United States prefers —not Ho Chi Minh's brand.

39. Christopher Lasch, "The Making of the War Class," *Columbia Forum,* 1, New Series (Winter 1971), 3.

3. A Vietnamese Viewpoint

by Truong Buu Lam

When the President of the United States declares that American troops will remain in the southern part of Vietnam as long as needed to preserve the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, what he means, quite simply, is that the American military shall not leave Vietnam until a pro-American government in Saigon manages to survive on its own and so maintain that part of Vietnam within the American sphere of influence. It is the self-reliance of a pro–U.S. government then that is at issue, not the self-determination of the Vietnamese people, and certainly not the relationship of the Vietnamese people toward that government. From the beginning until now, that has been the primary concern of U.S. policy-makers. The Pentagon Papers demonstrate this clearly, and the Nixon administration recently reiterated the position in unmistakable terms. In his news conference of January 1, 1972, Mr. Nixon imparted the impression that the release, by the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam, of U.S. prisoners of war remained the sole obstacle to a total withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. The very next day, however, an administration spokesman hurriedly modified the presidential statement: ". . . as in the past, he said, the survivability of the Saigon government of President Nguyen van Thieu remains a second condition for a total U.S. pull-out" (The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* January 3, 1972). Again, in his speech of January 25, although Mr. Nixon did commit his administration to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam within six months were his latest plan accepted, that plan contained conditions that amounted to a demand that the NLF lay down their arms and surrender to the Saigon authorities.

My task in this paper is to stress the deception which most have now come to see as a deception: that the interests of the Vietnamese people counted for something in Washington policymaking. With the publication of the Pentagon Papers, Americans can no longer grope for respectability with the adage that "We went in with good intentions."

When, at the American Historical Association meeting in 1971, two of the authors of the Pentagon Papers, Leslie Gelb and Daniel Ellsberg, were questioned on the lack of material relating to social conditions in Vietnam in the Papers, they replied: ". . . if the study failed to deal with the underlying social and human conditions in Vietnam, it was because these conditions were not being considered by American policy-makers" (The *New York Times,* Thursday, December 30, 1971).

Of course one did not need the Pentagon Papers to learn that, from Truman's administration on, altruistic concern for the welfare of the Vietnamese people meant nothing more than a very sick public relations joke to Washington. Bombs, defoliants, prisoners in tiger cages, political assassinations—these represent the

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net contribution of the United States to the welfare of Vietnam. Of interest in the Pentagon Papers, rather, is the unfolding of a policy which, while constantly holding certain American interests in focus, sought to secure those interests with increasingly desperate means, under increasingly untenable conditions.

In reviewing all the decisions made which propelled the United States into Vietnam, President Roosevelt's stand apart, in that his attitude toward Indochina seems to have included a measure of concern for the area's well-being. Having been drawn into a war in the Pacific with Japan, Roosevelt developed an interest in the affairs of Southeast Asia. Possibly irate during the war over Vichy's policy of surrendering to the Japanese and so effecting a cooperative relationship between local colonial administrators and the Japanese army, Roosevelt decided, in 1944, that Indochina should not be returned to France, but that it should be, instead, administered by an international trusteeship.

> . . . France has had the country—30 million inhabitants for nearly one hundred years, and the people are worse off than they were at the beginning. . . . France has milked it for a hundred years. The people of Indo-China are entitled to something better than that (Gravel edition, I:10).

The trusteeship concept was approved by Russia and China, but it met strong opposition from France and, understandably, Britain, which feared that its own possessions would be lost to the concept. Another factor still was to hinder the establishment of a trusteeship. In early 1945, the status of the Pacific islands captured by the Allies from the Japanese came under the consideration of various departments of the U.S. government. The Department of War and the Navy "advocated their retention under U.S. control as military bases" (Gravel ed., I:14). Avid for one set of territories, Roosevelt found it difficult to deny France another. In a statement issued by the State Department on April 3, 1945, the United States left the question of the international trusteeship of colonial territories on a fully voluntary basis, that is, up to the colonialists. Roosevelt, however, did not quite abandon his plan for Indochina. Earlier, in March, the Secretary of State had in fact drafted a statement in which the United States would explicitly pledge to "do all it can to be of assistance" to the French government in the latter's moves in reconquering Indochina from the Japanese. Roosevelt refused to issue that statement.

After Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945, his lingering influence could be seen in the initial U.S. refusal to help the French reestablish their control over Indochina. Which is not to say that the United States favored the Vietnamese, either, who, by mid-August, had gained control over the entire territory of Vietnam and, by September 2, 1945, established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In the American neutral stance, one could already see the balance tilt in France's favor, as indicated in the following document, possibly a telegram sent by the State Department to the American representative in Paris, or Saigon:

> US has no thought of opposing the reestablishment of French control in Indochina and no official statement by US GOVT has questioned even by implication French sovereignty over Indochina. However, it is not the policy of this GOVT to assist the French to reestablish their control over Indochina by force and the willingness of the US to see French control reestablished assumes that French claim to have the support of the population of Indochina is borne out by future events (Gravel ed., I:16–17).

Between 1945 and 1950, at which time the U.S. government definitively committed itself to the French side in the Franco-Vietnamese conflict, U.S. policy toward Vietnam developed in three distinct stages, in none of which were the interests of the Vietnamese people to count for anything.

First, the United States categorically refused to recognize Ho Chi Minh and his organization, the Viet Minh, as the true, legal representatives of the new Vietnamese state. In late 1945 and early 1946, the President of the United States and his Secretary of State received at least eight communications from Ho Chi Minh asking for U.S. recognition of Vietnam's independence, and even for the establishment of an international trusteeship over Vietnam. The United States chose to leave all those messages unanswered (Gravel ed., I:50). It paid no attention to Ho Chi Minh because, as the then Secretary of State put it in his telegram to the American representative in Hanoi, Ho had a "clear record as agent of international communism." What the American diplomat in Vietnam should try to avoid, he went on to say, is the "establishment of a Communist-dominated, Moscow-oriented state [in] Indochina" (Gravel ed., I:20).

Having decided to reject the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the United States sought to forward French interests more and more. The Franco-Vietnamese war broke out at a time when the United States was involved in helping Europe rebuild its economy out of the ruins of World War II. The Vietnamese war also coincided with British and French moves to check Soviet influence in Europe. Under the circumstances, the United States found it impractical to disassociate itself from the French recapture of Indochina. The French, for their part, discovered early in the conflict the usefulness of waging colonial wars under the guise of anticommunism. The merging of American interests with those of Western Europe is clearly demonstrated in the following instructions the State Department sent to its diplomats in Paris and Vietnam:

> Key our position is our awareness that in respect developments affecting position Western democratic powers in southern Asia, we essentially in same boat as French, also as British and Dutch. We cannot conceive setbacks to long-range interests France which would not also be our own (Gravel ed., I:31).

The commentator of the Pentagon Papers states rightly that, in those years, the United States "cared less about Vietnam than about France" (Gravel ed., I:51), and that "compared with European recovery, and escape from communist domination, the United States considered the fate of Vietnamese nationalism relatively insignificant" (Gravel ed., I:29).

The third stage in the evolution of U.S. policy paved the way for the ensuing civil war. Being hostile to the government of President Ho Chi Minh, the United States put pressure on France to create an alternative Vietnamese government. The State Department itself instructed its representatives in Vietnam to gather all information available pertaining to the "strength of non-Communist elements in Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:21). The search for a non-Communist Vietnamese regime was clearly stated to the French in February of 1947. While the United States "fully recognized France's sovereign position in that area [Indochina]," it advised France to abandon "its outmoded colonial outlook and methods." France was to emulate the outstanding examples of Britain and the Netherlands in their respective colonies, and yield a measure of autonomy to the Vietnamese. Still, the United States "does not lose sight the fact that Ho Chi Minh has direct Communist connections and it should be obvious that we are not interested in seeing colonial empire administrations supplanted by philosophy and political organizations emanating from and controlled by Kremlin" (Gravel ed., I:31). By the end of 1947, the French did, indeed, establish contact with Bao Dai, the former emperor of Vietnam, with the intention of using him to form a mildly independent, but above all anticommunist, government. The United States, for its part, devoted all its resources to bring about the Bao Dai solution. In 1948, the State Department instructed its ambassador in Paris to urge the French government to leave nothing undone "which will strengthen truly nationalist groups in Indochina and induce present supporters of the Viet Minh to come to the side of that group" (Gravel ed., I:32). The United States justly estimated that it would be impossible for any Vietnamese leader to form a government, or rally popular support, without displaying a modicum of independence. The French, however, were not quite willing to yield even a fraction of their prewar privileges. Finally, U.S. pressure assumed its familiar financial form. The American ambassador in Paris informed the French Foreign Minister that the United States was willing "to consider assisting French Government with respect to matter of financial aid for Indochina through ECA but could not give consideration to altering its present policy in this regard unless real progress made in reaching non-Communist solution in Indochina based on cooperation of true nationalists of that country" (Gravel ed., I:33).

Immediately on February 2, 1950, when the French government announced the ratification by the French National Assembly of the independence of Vietnam, the United States extended diplomatic recognition to the State of Vietnam, headed by Bao Dai. On February 16, 1950, France requested military and economic assistance in prosecuting the war in Indochina, and rapidly obtained it. In May 1950, the United States publicly announced the beginning of military and economic aid to the government of Bao Dai. An aid mission was established in Vietnam a few days later.

From 1950 on, U.S. policy toward Vietnam was not unlike what Washington now calls "Vietnamization," except that then, both the French and the Vietnamese were being used. On the one hand, the United States gave France enough money and military equipment to stave off its military defeat; on the other, it siphoned enough aid to the Bao Dai government to enable it to raise an army of Vietnamese men, equipped with modern Western weapons, trained by French officers, to fight other Vietnamese men.

Less than a year after the Communist victory in China, and at about the time of the outbreak of the Korean war, the United States became totally committed to France's aims in Vietnam. The events in China and Korea did not, as often supposed, incite the United States to blindly adopt an anticommunist stance *vis-à-vis* Vietnam. That course of action, as we are now able to trace it, had been set back in late 1946. The anti–Ho Chi Minh, pro-French, and then pro–Bao Dai policies stemmed from one and the same preoccupation of the State Department's: to stop "Moscow-oriented regimes" in Asia and in Western Europe from becoming a strong defense shield for the Soviet Union. That the United States, along with much of Western Europe, should have feared the Communist threat to their hitherto comfortable world of empires and colonies is understandable. What the United States failed to grasp, however, was that socialism, wedded to the desire for independence, had become a formidable local force in many of the old colonies, and that no alleged links to the Kremlin would explain it away. At every stage in the evolution of U.S. policy toward Vietnam, the United States was warned of this analytical confusion by its own agents, or by people familiar with the problem. The State Department made its decisions in full knowledge of the data. For example, the State Department knew of Ho Chi Minh's commitment to the Communist ideology. It also knew perfectly well that Russia had had very little to do in Vietnam. According to a report from the Office of Intelligence Research of the Department of State itself, "evidence of Kremlin-directed conspiracy was found in virtually all countries [of Southeast Asia] except Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:34). The United States chose to side with France against Vietnam when its Director in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department wrote the following memorandum:

> Although the French in Indochina have made far-reaching paper-concessions to the Vietnamese desire for autonomy, French actions on the scene have been directed toward whittling down the powers and the territorial extent of the Vietnam "free state." This process the Vietnamese have continued to resist. At the same time, the French themselves admit that they lack the military strength to reconquer the country. In brief, with inadequate forces, with public opinion sharply at odds, with a government rendered largely ineffective through internal division, the French have tried to accomplish in Indochina what a strong and united Britain has found it unwise to attempt in Burma. Given the present elements in the situation, guerrilla warfare may continue indefinitely (Gravel ed., I:29).

Washington actively supported the Bao Dai solution, although it was surely familiar with the following remark of the Chief of Staff of the French Army on his return from an observation tour in 1949:

> If Ho Chi Minh has been able to hold off French intervention for so long, it is because the Viet Minh leader has surrounded himself with a group of men of incontestable worth. . . . [Bao Dai, by contrast, had] a government composed of twenty representatives of phantom parties, the best organized of which would have difficulty in rallying twenty-five adherents . . . (Gravel ed., I:59).

The conflict in Vietnam which began as a struggle for independence against a colonial power waged by a coalition of several political groups, the Viet Minh, in which the Communists played a leading role, now had added to it a new and disastrous dimension in 1950: that of a civil war. That the United States created the conditions for a civil war is obvious. The French were primarily interested in defeating the Viet Minh forces and repossessing their former colony. At the instigation of the United States, they adopted a secondary political ploy: the setting up of an anticommunist "national" government in Saigon, whence have derived all the "Saigon" governments since. Without the support of France and the United States, the Bao Dai government would never have come into being, and the anticolonial war would have been waged and won, whereas today, the war of independence and a civil war rage on, side by side.

After 1950, and particularly after the onset of the Eisenhower administration in 1952, Vietnam assumed the importance of a test-case for the United States. The events in Vietnam were perceived to be intimately, and inextricably, linked to events in other Southeast Asian countries. The outbreak of the Korean war and the signing of the peace treaty with Japan in 1951, stimulated the United States to secure all countries from Burma to Japan for the "free world." In concrete terms, keeping Southeast Asia "free" meant the following: demonstrating to capitalist and other noncommunist countries the resolve of the United States to withstand Communist expansion; assuring a Southeast Asian market for the Japanese economy which would otherwise lean too heavily on American aid; removing the need for a Japanese accommodation with the Soviet bloc; securing access to the world's richest sources of natural rubber and tin, and perhaps second-richest source of petroleum; securing access to direct and well-developed air and sea routes between the western Pacific and India and the Near East; gaining control of military bases and other facilities on mainland Southeast Asia which would lessen the need for less desirable insular installations. All these considerations are set forth in a National Security Council staff study dated February 13, 1952 (Gravel ed., I:375–376). Given the importance of Southeast Asia and given the fact that Indochina has long been considered "a key area of Southeast Asia . . . under immediate threat" (Gravel ed., I:373), the United States decided that, in the case that the Vietnamese [the Saigon government] should be weary of the war, and the French should accept to negotiate an end to it, the United States should still "continue to oppose any negotiated settlement with the Viet Minh," because "any settlement based on a withdrawal of French forces would be tantamount to handing over Indochina to communism" (Gravel ed., I:379).

A year later, actual entry into the war by the United States was anticipated: "If the French actually decided to withdraw, the United States would have to consider most seriously whether to take over in this area." So advocated a report by the State Department, in August of 1953, at a time when the United States raised its aid to the Paris and Saigon forces from $1,700,000 in that year to $2,160,000 in 1954, or from 33 percent to 61 percent of the total war cost (Gravel ed., I:407–408).

In 1954, while the Viet Minh besieged the French at Dien Bien Phu, the National Security Council debated the advisability of salvaging the French military fiasco by dispatching into Vietnam U.S. naval, air and ground forces (Gravel ed., I:465–472). The use of nuclear weapons was suggested quite matter-of-factly: "the estimated forces initially to be supplied by the U.S. . . . are based on the assumption of availability [of nuclear weapons]. If such weapons are not available, the force requirements may have to be modified" (Gravel ed., I:466–467). While the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons were carefully studied, that is, the repercussions of their use on U.S. allies, on nonaligned countries, and on the Soviet bloc, not a word is to be found concerning what they would do to the Vietnamese people or country.

Even after Prime Minister Eden had shown him a map of Indochina which, according to Dulles, indicated that "virtually all of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia is under or subject to imminent control by the Viet Minh," the Secretary of State concluded that "it would be a tragedy not to take action which would prevent Indochina from being written off."

From all the documents available on the U.S. role in the Geneva talks from May 8 to July 21, 1954, it appears that the United States attended the negotiations with the clear intention of persuading the French to continue the fighting and to seek a military victory. French proposals for a Vietnamese coalition government were strongly discouraged, for such a government "would open the way for the ultimate seizure of control by the Communists under conditions which might preclude timely and effective external assistance in the prevention of such seizure," the "timely and effective external assistance" to come from the United States, clearly. Neither was any territory to be ceded to the Viet Minh, because that "would constitute a retrogressive step in the Containment Policy and would invite similar Communist tactics against other countries of Southeast Asia." Settlements based on self-determination through free elections were not to be given a thought for that "would be attended by almost certain loss of the Associated States [Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos] to Communist control" (Gravel ed., I:449).

But the map that Eden showed to Dulles spoke louder to a weakened France than all of Dulles' exhortations, so that the American Secretary of State soon had to renounce too much of his desiderata.

On June 14, 1954, Dulles cabled his ambassador in Paris informing him that plans for a U.S. intervention in Indochina were now virtually abandoned. "This," wrote Dulles, "is the inevitable result of the steady deterioration in Indochina which makes the problem of intervention and pacification more and more difficult" (Gravel ed., I:524). Soon after this, the question of the partition of Vietnam was broached. Dulles' immediate reaction to this was: "There can . . . be no repeat no question of U.S. participation in any attempt to QUOTE sell UNQUOTE a partition to non-Communist Vietnamese" (17 June 1954, Gravel ed., I:531). The following day, Dulles sent another cable to Geneva saying that the United States was willing to "reexamine possible *de facto* partition Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:532). The reason for this about-face was that the proposed demarcation line seemed advantageous to the French, and that, in any event, the French military situation in the Tonkin delta had rapidly deteriorated and become desperate.

The Geneva Accords were signed on July 21, 1954. The war between the French and the Viet Minh officially ended. Vietnam was temporarily divided into two regions. At that very moment, the United States prepared to pick up the pieces the French were leaving. Already, by June 1, 1954, Colonel Lansdale had arrived in Saigon to direct the Saigon Military Mission, the aims of which were to "undertake paramilitary operations against the enemy and to wage political-psychological warfare. Later, after Geneva, the mission was modified to prepare the means for undertaking paramilitary operations in Communist areas rather than to wage unconventional warfare (Gravel ed., I:574).

The interests of the Vietnamese people dictated that the country be united under a single government of independence. But it was against the interests of the United States, as Washington conceived of them, to have that government be Ho Chi Minh's. The United States, therefore, undertook to lend total support to the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, who became Prime Minister of the Bao Dai government in 1954 and who eventually replaced Bao Dai as Chief of State in 1955, in hopes of seeing it develop into a viable alternative to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It would be wrong to think that the United States opposed the concept of reunification. It had taken, at the Geneva Conference, the pledge to "continue to seek to achieve unity" for the divided countries, but how the National Security Council conceived of reunification is another matter. In 1956, after the deadline for the reunification elections had passed, the National Security Council directed all U.S. agencies in Vietnam to:

> Assist Free Vietnam to develop a strong, stable, and constitutional government to enable Free Vietnam to assert an increasingly attractive contrast to conditions in the present Communist zone . . . [and] work toward the weakening of the Communists in North and South Vietnam in order to bring about the eventual peaceful reunification of a free and independent Vietnam under anti-Communist leadership (Gravel ed., I:267).

In the meantime, then, southern Vietnam had to be made workable, appealing, and U.S. money poured into Saigon to do precisely that. How much of the largess benefited the Vietnamese living in southern Vietnam? The purpose of the aid was not to lift the standard of life of the Vietnamese:

> Security was the focus of U.S. aid; more than 75% of the economic aid the U.S. provided in the same period went into the GVN [Government of Vietnam-Saigon] military budget; thus at least $8 out of every $10 of aid went directly toward security. In addition, other amounts of nominally economic aid (e.g., that for public administration) went toward security forces, and aid for agriculture and transportation principally funded projects with strategic purposes and with an explicit military rationale. For example, a 20-mile stretch of highway from Saigon to Bien Hoa, built at Gen. Williams' instance for specifically military purposes, received more U.S. economic aid than all funds provided for labor, community development, social welfare, health, and education in the years 1954–1961 (Gravel ed., I:268).

Being a nation of peasants, the Vietnamese desperately needed an agrarian reform to abolish the inequalities spawned under colonialism: after six years of study, research, and various programs, the situation, as of 1960, remained as follows: "45% of the land remained concentrated in the hands of 2% of landowners, and 15% of the landlords owned 75% of all the land" (Gravel ed., I:254).

Not only did the Ngo Dinh Diem regime make no attempt to eradicate social injustices, it prevented its citizens from attempting to redress these wrongs in the political arena. The government tolerated no opposition of any kind and political life was at a virtual standstill. Prisons overflowed with political prisoners. "In brief, Diem's policies virtually assured that political challenges to him would have to be extra-legal" (Gravel ed., I:257).

Some U.S. policymakers were naturally uneasy at the blatantly dictatorial ways of their protégés in Saigon, but even with the advent of a new U.S. administration in 1961, they hesitated to revise U.S. policy toward the Ngo Dinh Diem government, simply because "South Vietnam (unlike any of the other countries in Southeast Asia), was the creation of the United States" (Gravel ed., II:22).

Most of the Vietnamese who cared to know, had known that since 1954. And those who cared to fight, or saw no alternative but to fight, quietly picked up their arms again and resumed the old anti-colonialist struggle which had merely subsided.

> Studies of peasant attitudes conducted in recent years have demonstrated that for many, the struggle which began in 1945 against colonialism continued uninterrupted throughout Diem's regime: in 1954 the foes of nationalists were transformed from France and Bao Dai, to Diem and the U.S. . . . but the issues at stake never changed (Gravel ed., I:295).

Subsequent to 1960, all U.S. interventions in the Vietnamese situation developed logically out of the premise that South Vietnam was to be kept within the boundaries of the "free world," regardless of how that affected the Vietnamese people.

After 1960, events in South Vietnam were but the reenactment of events fifteen years earlier. There was a change of actors, but not of plots. The Viet Minh were replaced by the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the French by the Americans, and the Bao Dai government by subsequent Saigon governments. In the eyes of the Americans, just as the Viet Minh had to be controlled by Moscow, although no evidence for it could be found, so now the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam had to have been directed by North Vietnam, although ample proof could be found for localized, southern grievances and organized opposition. The real difference, though, is that whereas France was not able to bomb Moscow, the United States has been absolutely free to all but devastate North Vietnam. What saved North Vietnam from total destruction, and the North Vietnamese people from annihilation, is the risk the United States of America always faces of bringing China and the Soviet Union into an enlarged war. American planes did not bomb the oil depots and power plants around Hanoi and Haiphong not for the sake of the Vietnamese people, but because that would "trigger Chinese intervention on the ground. . . . This is what we wish to avoid" (Gravel ed., IV:31). But if other less risky ways could be found to arrive at the same results, they were to be considered:

> Strikes at population targets (per se) are likely not only to create a counterproductive wave of revulsion abroad and at home, but greatly to increase the risk of enlarging the war with China and the Soviet Union. Destruction of locks and dams, however—if handled right—might . . . offer promise. It should be studied. Such destruction does not kill or drown people. By shallow-flooding the rice, it leads after time to widespread starvation (more than a million?) unless food is provided—which we could offer to do "at the conference table" (Gravel ed., IV:43).

Southern Vietnam, however, was truly a free-fire zone, with China safely at a distance. And that is why the United States has been destroying its people outright, in order to "save" them.

4. The Media and the Message

by James Aronson

> The people of this nation, in whose name and by whose ultimate consent all high government officials serve, have both the need and the right to be thoroughly informed on decisions.

Thomas Jefferson did not say that. Robert S. McNamara did, in the preface to a collection of his speeches delivered during his tenure as Secretary of Defense under President Kennedy and President Johnson, and published in 1968 after he had left the Johnson administration to become director of the World Bank.

In 1971, Arthur Krock, the former Washington Correspondent of the *New York Times,* titled his most recent book *The Consent of the Governed, and Other Deceits.* It is possible that Krock had read McNamara's collected speeches—an assignment of unusually cruel punishment—but he hardly needed to do so in arriving at his title: at age eighty-five, he had known twelve American presidents and countless cabinet officials.

A less cynical man who has known fewer presidents but more people (as distinguished from government officials) phrased it less elegantly but more pungently just before publication of the Pentagon Papers by the *New York Times* had been aborted by federal court order. He was Jimmy Breslin, reporter and student of politics-in-the-raw, in the unaccustomed role of Class Day orator at Harvard College on June 16, 1971.

"I was just thinking on the way up here," said Breslin, "that the Berrigans are in jail and the Bundys are in the street." Since the brothers Bundy, McGeorge and William P., were so closely identified with Harvard and the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, that comment in Harvard Yard had a piercing point. Breslin continued:

> This week we all found out that [soldiers have] died to keep alive the lies of some people who thought they were important. This is a very great institution here. But with these sustained reprisals hanging in the air, I just think that you might think you have something to overcome, coming out of here too.

There are many Americans with something to overcome—and to learn—in the aftermath of the Pentagon Papers, not only in the universities and the federal government, but also in the communications establishment with which this chapter is concerned. Few events in recent years have been so revealing of the inner relations between the government and the communications industry. Nothing has borne so directly on the public's right to know, a concept which for more than twenty-five Cold War years has been far more violated than honored. Few de-

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velopments have cast a colder light on the credibility of the highest elected and appointed officials and, in reflection and by omission, on the communications industry itself.

For the owners and operators of the newspapers, the managers of the radio-television networks, and the men and women who work in the news industry, the summer of 1971 was a crisis point. Since November 1969, Vice President Agnew had been blanketing the lecture circuit with his alliterative assaults on press and television news commentators; the Justice Department had been seeking through grand jury subpoenas to intimidate reporters by forcing disclosure of their news sources; the White House news coordinator, Herbert Klein, had been attempting to circumvent a not entirely compliant Washington press corps to deal directly with flattered news executives throughout the country; the President himself through a series of selective briefings had been anointing his favorite newspapers and columnists, and marking others for outer darkness, or at least for a purgatorial interim.

This was the atmosphere in which the Pentagon Papers were published, first by the *New York Times* on June 13, 1971, then in relay by the Washington *Post,* the Boston *Globe,* the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch,* and several other newspapers. The times and events would seem to have called for the most searching kind of self-examination, not only of the factors behind the publication of the Pentagon Papers, but of the whole question of government-media relations, and the responsibility of the communications industry to the public. The immediate core issue derived from the Nixon administration's concerted attack on the media; in a larger context, it was related to the origins of the Cold War at the close of World War II and the role of the communications industry in relation to Cold War policymaking in Washington. In this context, an examination of the communications media during—and before—the time span of the Pentagon Papers is in order.

A key question in the examination is this: How much of the information contained in the Pentagon documents was available to the media and, if much of it was, why was it not made public?

The opportunity rarely arises from a left viewpoint to quote with approval a comment by Joseph Alsop. However, on June 23, 1971, Alsop wrote:

> The orgy of public hypocrisy, touched off by the . . . Pentagon documents, is something that has to be seen to be believed. . . . In reality, any senator who did his homework and any reasonably realistic and hardworking reporter could easily discover what was actually going on, in the period covered by the *Times* quotations.

However accurate this appraisal, there remains the question of what the hardworking reporters (presumably including Alsop) did with their discoveries, if and when they made them. Nonetheless, there was confirmation of Alsop's view from another correspondent who has generally expressed approval of the United States intervention in Southeast Asia. On June 17, 1971, Keyes Beech, a veteran of the Indochina theater, wrote in the Chicago *Daily News:*

> The *New York Times* report . . . held few surprises for the correspondents who have covered this war from the start. In general, the Pentagon account confirms what some of us knew, half-knew, or suspected without being able to document. Some of us had and wrote the story piecemeal. While

> we could see what was happening here, we could not know what was happening in Washington.

What *was* happening in Washington, as far as the news corps was concerned, was recorded in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Winter 1970–1971) by Jules Witcover, an astute Washington correspondent of the Los Angeles *Times*. Months before the Pentagon documents were made public, Witcover wrote in his article titled "Where Washington Reporting Failed":

> While the press corps in those years diligently reported what the government said about Vietnam, and questioned the inconsistencies as they arose, too few sought out opposing viewpoints and expertise until too late, when events and the prominence of the Vietnam dissent could no longer be ignored. In coverage of the war, the press corps' job narrowed down to three basic tasks—reporting what the government said, finding out whether it was true, and assessing whether the policy enunciated worked. The group did a highly professional job on the first task. But it fell down on the second and third, and there is strong evidence the reason is too many reporters sought the answers in all three categories from the same basic source—the government.

There was a fourth task not cited by Witcover which may be the most pertinent of all. Beyond the question of whether the policy *worked,* the basic question, unasked, was *whether it was wise, whether it was in the public interest?* The reason for the correspondents' confining approach, Witcover ruefully conceded later, and Keyes Beech confirmed in his book *Not Without the Americans* (Doubleday, 1971), was that the news corps, both in Indochina and in Washington, was still enthralled by the Cold War and its central philosophy—the theory of the international Communist conspiracy.

The pervasiveness of this philosophy, even in the earliest stages of the Indochina question, within the media, was delineated by Susan Welch of the political science faculty of the University of Nebraska in a thorough survey of four major American newspapers from 1950 to 1956.[1] The newspapers were the *New York Times,* Washington *Post,* San Francisco *Chronicle,* and Chicago *Tribune.* Some of Miss Welch's conclusions:

> It was in the 1950s, not the 1960s, that this distant and undeclared war became established in the minds of both the public and public officials as a showdown between the forces of Communism and anti-Communism, vital to the "free world"; that Ho Chi Minh was identified as a tool of a larger Communist movement, and that victory in Indochina was seen as vital to the preservation of all Asia and beyond. What the press did to help establish these views is important. . . . The press echoed the administration in its definition of the Indochinese situation. In only one instance was the basic assumption underlying United States policy questioned. The terms of the debate hardened at a very early stage in policymaking, and remained constant throughout. The assumptions of the administration were reiterated and emphasized in news stories and editorials alike.
>
> Much of the information gathered by the press . . . was administration sponsored, directly or indirectly. . . . Support for the position of the administration (both before and after the Republican takeover) as expressed

> in editorials was high for all but the Chicago *Tribune*. . . . [It] was reflected by the rhetoric with which the Indochina war [between the Vietminh and the French] was discussed. News stories also reinforced the preconceptions of the administration largely because most of the stories dealt with quotes and comments of those involved in the decision making.

The conservative Chicago *Tribune* alone questioned the basic assumptions of administration policy, largely because of the *Tribune's* isolationist position. Fighting Communists at home was a worthy pursuit, it felt, but sending American men and money abroad, particularly to bail out the colonial French, was patently absurd. But the liberal press—the *Times,* the *Post,* and the *Chronicle*—reacted with "pre-established programs of action—helping to defend a free—or almost free—people against Communist aggression." From 55 to 85 percent of the "hard news" items about Indochina were of this variety. When the news source was independent of the administration, and indicated that neither French nor American policy was working, the indications were discounted in the news rooms and the editorial sanctums. The timidity of the press as to the "ideological implications" involved in Indochina was presented dispassionately and clearly by Miss Welch:

> There might have been a certain degree of risk in proclaiming too loudly Ho Chi Minh's nationalistic appeal without immediate disclaimers of his status as a puppet of Moscow, or Peking. The period 1950–1956 involved an internal climate not designed to encourage those who did not see Communism in this prescribed pattern. The whole early Cold War era also tended to mold feelings about Communism into black and white patterns, with little place in the accepted pattern for unusual combinations of nationalism and Communism. The Korean struggle only reinforced already held preconceptions about the aggressive and Moscow-Peking directed nature of Communism.

The excesses of the McCarthy period subsided in the decade that followed, but the institutionalized Cold War philosophy maintained the molded feelings to keep public opposition to governmental policy at a minimum. The media went along. In his *Columbia Journalism Review* article cited earlier, Jules Witcover raised a significant point anticipating the furor over the Pentagon documents and the reasons for it. He said: "One can speculate how the course of the war might have been affected had more members of the Washington news community relied less on their government and more on its responsible critics in appraising the veracity and effectiveness of government policy."

In June 1971, public reaction to the publication of the documents was based not so much on an understanding of the issues involved in the American presence in Indochina, as on a realization that the public had been lied to for years. The reaction could not be based on an understanding of the issues because the issues had rarely been presented in a manner that would enable the public to form opinions or reach judgments about the events that shaped the issues. Therefore, in the news stories and editorials about the documents, far more stress was placed on the circumstances involved in obtaining and publishing the documents, and on freedom of the press, than on the *contents* of the documents. The core issue thus was never fully discussed.

There was a defensive echo of Witcover's comment in a retrospective editorial in the *New York Times,* appropriately on July 4, 1971. It said:

> Even if these secret decisions, now being revealed in the Pentagon Papers, had been generally understood by the public at the time, we are not at all sure that in the climate of those days, the results would have been any different. Given the fear of Communist penetration and aggression thoughout the '50s and most of the '60s, it is quite likely that the American public would have supported the basic rationale of escalation even if the respective administrations had been as forthcoming as democratic procedures demanded.

The *Times* may be sound in this conclusion, but the uneasy question implied is neither asked nor answered directly. Did not the vast majority of the United States media—including the *New York Times*—advance the myth of the international Communist conspiracy and help engender the atmosphere of fear? They did not dispute Joe McCarthy's ends—only his methods. They worried far more about damage to American prestige abroad—that is, the credibility of American policy—than damage to Americans and American principles of freedom at home. They did not report on the open and systematic violations by the United States of the Geneva agreements of 1954 (though they did publish the government's denials), or the reasons for the rise of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Nor did they demand withdrawal of American support for a brutal and corrupt administration in Saigon—until the situation became so untenable that even the administration was forced to take action. The case history of the media and Ngo Dinh Diem, whose life and death figure so prominently in the Pentagon documents, is instructive.

For the American public, the myth of Ngo Dinh Diem seems to have been fashioned in equal measure by Cardinal Spellman, Michigan State University (acting on behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency), and a group of publicists led by Joseph H. Buttinger, an Austrian anti-Communist who had won the favor of Colonel Edward M. Lansdale, the CIA chief in Vietnam in the 1950s. Thus, when Diem came to the United States in 1957, as the President of the Republic of South Vietnam, the communications media were prepared to do somersaults for him on the welcoming red carpet—and did.

The *New York Times* declared that "by establishing democratic forms, President Diem had carved a deep niche in official esteem in Washington." A New York City banquet was presided over by Henry Luce of *Time,* and *Life* applauded his "great accomplishment" in abrogating the 1956 elections, ordered under the Geneva agreements, to decide the future of Vietnam. The *Reporter* magazine and the *New Leader* (which had provided two of its editors for the executive committee of the American Friends of Vietnam, along with Max Lerner and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.) were effusive in their praise. In 1960, he was still "doughty little Diem" to *Time,* and *Newsweek*'s Ernest K. Lindley described him as "one of Asia's ablest leaders."

Thus it went through the period of blatant repression by Diem of all political opposition and the consequent rise of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. These developments went almost entirely unreported in the American press, except for a few left-wing weeklies. Wilfred Burchett, as a correspondent of the *National Guardian* and a contributor to newspapers abroad, set up a home base in Cambodia and traveled extensively throughout Southeast Asia. He was a frequent visitor to North Vietnam (long before any other Western correspondents were there) and was permitted into areas of South Vietnam controlled by the

Liberation Front. His cabled and airmailed dispatches appeared regularly in the *National Guardian,* whose editors regularly had extra proofs run off and hand-delivered to the daily newspapers in New York and the wire services. They were ignored.

Occasionally a Burchett report which had been published in the *Asahi Shimbun* of Tokyo (circulation 5 million) was relayed back to the United States, where it appeared in abbreviated fashion in a few newspapers. Later, when the war was admittedly going badly for the United States forces, and when it became apparent that Burchett had access to authoritative information in both North and South Vietnam, the Associated Press requested articles from him which appeared with an italic precede describing him as a "Communist journalist," and warning that his dispatches should be read with that in mind. Burchett protested to the Associated Press and the description was modified to "a journalist close to Communist leaders." In the United States press, the description did not disappear until the late 1960s. Yet while Burchett escaped from his precede, the American public was still a prisoner of the prejudices of newspaper editors and publishers.

By 1962 it was clear to the *New York Times,* at least, that something was going terribly wrong in Vietnam, and it sent one of its ablest reporters, Homer Bigart, to Vietnam (it was he who coined the slogan "Sink or Swim With Ngo Dinh Diem"). Bigart became involved in what became known as the "second war" in Vietnam—the war of the correspondents against the combined United States–Vietnamese authority in Saigon. In fact, it was not a war at all, but a serious conflict between some correspondents[2] and almost all official functionaries as to how to carry out American policy most efficiently—in brief, how to win the war in the shortest possible time. This is not to deny that there were first-rate examples of honest and courageous reporting both in the field and in Saigon. But what was so painfully apparent was the contradiction between the reporting of the best of the correspondents and the conclusions they drew from their own reportage, both about United States policy and the aspirations of the Vietnamese people.

By insisting on presenting to the American public the facts about the Diem government, the "Young Turks" in Vietnam (as they were called) hastened a review of Washington's *tactics,* but not its *policy.* That policy for Indochina has remained unaltered from President Kennedy's decision in 1961 to commit forces in depth to Vietnam until this day. The group of remarkably able and dedicated newspapermen assigned to Saigon in the years 1962–1963 strove mightily to make the American public aware that the "Miracle of Diem" was a costly myth, and that a change was needed. Their goal, however, was not an end to United States intervention, but reform of that intervention to attain an American victory.

This was reflected in the writings of Halberstam, Browne, and Sheehan after their tours of duty in Vietnam. In 1967, Browne had moved from acceptance of the "credible" American presence in Vietnam (expressed in 1966) to an anguished conclusion that "Asia and America seem doomed to play out the tragic drama to the end." [3] In 1965, David Halberstam said the United States could not agree to a neutral Vietnam which would create a "vacuum" for Communist "subversion." Withdrawal would encourage the "enemies" of the West to attempt "insurgencies like the ones in Vietnam" throughout the world.[4] In 1966, Sheehan conceded that "the military junta in Vietnam would not last a week without American bayonets to protect it." But, he said, there was no alternative to the American strategy to "continue to prosecute the war," and to develop a "killing machine" to be turned on the enemy "in the hope that over the years enough killing will be done to force the enemy's collapse through exhaustion and despair." [5]

There is no doubt that Sheehan and Browne (both now on the staff of the *New York Times,* as is Charles Mohr) have come a far way from their despairing and limited views of the middle 1960s. So has Halberstam, and it was ironic in its way that Sheehan became so intimately involved in the publication of the Pentagon documents, and that he and Halberstam were called to appear before a federal grand jury in Boston in the fishing expedition following the disclosure by Dr. Daniel Ellsberg that he had given the documents to the *New York Times.* Perhaps purposeful would be a better description than ironic, for the vindictive arm of government is long, and the malice of government officials seeking to cover their tracks (as so many of the civilian strategists of Vietnam policy have been seeking to do) is pervasive. Sheehan and Halberstam, after all, committed the cardinal sin: they refused as reporters to "get on the team," and that, at any stage of governmental operations, is an unforgivable act.

Perhaps a clue to the limitations of even the best of the reporters in Vietnam in the 1960s—in addition to their lack of historical perspective and knowledge of the area they were covering—may be found in an examination of journalism's unwritten and adjustable rules of objectivity. According to these rules, the only reliable sources of information about Indochina were untainted "free world" centers, and most central of all was the government of the United States. Sources of information outside the government were suspect, and radical sources almost entirely rejected. The most distinguished Asian scholars had not quite recovered their acceptability lost during the McCarthy years[6] and, besides, they almost universally disapproved of the American intervention. Why go to *them* for background when abstracts of State Department white papers abounded?

Correspondents of left-wing American journals and respected European correspondents like Jean Lacouture and the commentators of *Le Monde* were rarely quoted. The radicals, of course, wanted the Vietnamese to "win," and the French, once they were out, wanted the Americans to "lose," because France too had lost.

When Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times,* in a startling series of dispatches from North Vietnam at the turn of 1967, discredited Washington's denials of bombings near Hanoi, and confirmed the Burchett reports that had been appearing regularly in the *National Guardian,* he was charged by Chalmers Roberts of the Washington *Post* with using a subversive typewriter in the service of Ho Chi Minh. The campaign of venom against him by his own colleagues was almost unprecedented (the *Times* itself, in its devotion to balance and objectivity in the news, featured on page one an article by Hanson Baldwin, its military affairs analyst, taking sharp issue with the findings of Salisbury on the scene in North Vietnam). Salisbury was deprived of a Pulitzer Prize for his series when the Pulitzer board blatantly overruled the committee of editors who had selected Salisbury for the award.

There was an echo of all this at the Paris talks on Vietnam in June 1971. Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, the representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (which the *New York Times* still calls the Vietcong), said that the Pentagon documents "confirm a truth that we have often expressed at this table, to wit, that the American administration . . . conceived plans for unleashing war and spreading it stage by stage."

The North Vietnamese delegate at the same session produced a white paper—published on July 10, 1965, in English among other languages, and broadcast to the world over Radio Hanoi—entitled "Twenty Years of American Aggression and Intervention in Vietnam." It was a document of remarkable accuracy, as the Pentagon Papers demonstrate. Included was a description of the infamous Plan No. 6, drawn up by Walt W. Rostow, then chairman of the State Department's Planning Council, calling for increasing commitments of United States ground forces and air power.

In December 1965, Nguyen Huu Tho, chairman of the National Liberation Front, said in a statement (confirmed by the Pentagon documents) that the United States was operating under a "McNamara Plan" aimed at "pacifying the south within the two years of 1964–1965, and representing a new and greater effort to improve the critical situation of the puppet government and forces, and to concentrate their forces on pacifying the main areas under the Front's control." Such statements, said Erwin Knoll,[7] "received scant attention in the American media. They were merely 'Communist propaganda,' and our government, which knew better, hardly bothered to issue rebuttals."

The July 1965 white paper was available to the American press immediately after it was published. It was the subject at the time of both a leading news article and an editorial in the *National Guardian.* No American newspaper of general circulation used it. But Vietnamese were not the only pariahs for the American media. Even certified non-Communist Americans foolhardy enough to be skeptical of or oppose administration policy or pronouncements were ignored or discredited. Consider the story of the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964.

I. F. Stone in his weekly newsletter,[8] almost alone among the Washington press corps, presented evidence immediately after the event indicating that the alleged attack by North Vietnamese gunboats against the United States fleet was a fraud. His reports were ignored by his colleagues who, years later, would review his books (based largely on his earlier published material) and honor him as the conscience of the Washington press corps. But the post-mortem flattery smacked of confession-booth relief and even caste condescension. This tenacious little bulldog, as they like to call him, was eminently qualified to be the mascot of the White House Correspondents Association, but never a member. Not that Stone had ever wanted in.

On August 5, 1964, Secretary McNamara held a news conference—maps, pointers, and field-grade flunkies at his elbow—to explain in his computerized fashion what had happened in the Gulf of Tonkin. There was not one probing question from the reporters, although it might have seemed inconceivable to at least some of them that two little North Vietnamese gunboats would seek out and attack the mighty American fleet, knowing full well what the reprisal would be.

The *New York Times,* after Tonkin, saw in the alleged attack "an ominous perspective . . . the beginning of a mad adventure by the North Vietnamese Communists." The mad adventures, however, were on the other side—a fact which became clear in the American escalation of the war immediately thereafter. And the calculated fraud was exposed further in statements by members of the crews of the United States vessels involved in the incident, long before the Pentagon Papers were published.

Dissenting legislators (there were few enough of them then) fared little better than Stone. On August 10, 1964, Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska who, with Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, five days earlier had cast the only dissenting votes against the Tonkin Gulf resolution, delivered the first speech on the Senate floor advocating withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. The speech was a reasoned and factual presentation of the circumstances of American involvement. The next morning Gruening sought out newspaper accounts of his speech.

There was not a line about it in either the *New York Times* or the Washington *Post*. Had he been able to repeat the exercise with most if not all other newspapers in the country that day, the search would have been equally futile.

A significant indicator of the communication media's attitude during the 1950s and 1960s was provided in the *New York Times* editorial of July 4, 1971. "We do not think," it said, "that the respective officials involved made recommendations or took decisions that they did not conscientiously believe to be in the public interest. As an early opponent of the escalation of American military force in Vietnam, this newspaper has never attacked the motives of those leaders. . . ."

The key words here are *escalation* and *motives*. The *Times* did not oppose *intervention* in Indochina, as we have seen. On the contrary, it endorsed it with exhortation to victory ("Thomas Jefferson would have no quarrel" with Ngo Dinh Diem's definition of democracy, it said as far back as 1957). The *Times* did begin to oppose escalation when it became apparent that there could be no military victory in Indochina. Similarly, it never questioned the *motives* of the succeeding administrations because it subscribed wholeheartedly to the policies being motivated.

Speculation is a doubtful practice at best. But we should include the period before 1960, for which a reasonable speculation might be: If the communications media had presented the history of Indochina and the aspirations of its peoples; if they had opened their facilities to the opponents of developing Cold War policy to encourage a public debate based on realities and not on myth—if they had done these things, would the government, confronted with an informed public, have dared to embark on a venture which has cost millions of Indochinese lives, thousands of American lives, incredible destruction of the life-giving land of Indochina, and incalculable damage to the spiritual fabric of American life?

This leads to a central question about the publication of the documents bearing directly upon the responsibility of the communications industry and the public's right to know. The revelations dealt with events that had occurred before 1968. In response to the government's charge that publication was damaging to the security interests of the country, the *Times* responded editorially on June 16, the day after publication had been suspended:

> It is in the interest of the people of this country to be informed. . . . A fundamental responsibility of the press in this democracy is to publish information that helps the people of the United States to understand the processes of their own government, especially when these processes have been clouded over in a veil of public dissimulation and even deception. . . . Once this material fell into our hands, it was not only in the interest of the American people to publish it but, even more emphatically, it would have been an abnegation of responsibility not to have published it.
>
> Obviously the *Times* would not have made this decision if there had been any reason to believe that publication would have endangered the life of a single American soldier or in any way threatened the security of our country or the peace of the world. The documents in question belong to history. . . . Their publication could not conceivably damage American security interests, much less the lives of Americans or Indochinese.

Five days later, when the Washington *Post* began publication, the *Times* emphasized again that the documents "in no way affect current plans, operations, or policy; and there seems no longer any justification for these papers . . . to bear the kind of classification that keeps them from general public access." The next day, June 22, the Boston *Globe* began its publication of parts of the documents not yet published. Its editorial likewise assured its readers that "the nation's security" was not involved in publication.

The implication here was that neither the *Times* nor the *Globe* nor, perhaps, any other newspaper would publish classified material relating to current or future events, no matter how salutary to the national interest public knowledge of that material might be. The conclusion was that the *Times,* in any case, had not altered its policy in regard to such information since the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961.

It will be recalled that in April 1961, *Times* correspondent Tad Szulc came into possession of information in Florida that a United States financed and supported invasion of Cuba was imminent. The *Times,* at the request of the White House and largely on the advice of James Reston, then Washington bureau chief, withheld publication of key facts of the story on the ground that it was in the national interest to do so.

Again, in October 1962, the *New York Times* and the Washington *Post* had firm knowledge during the so-called missile crisis of President Kennedy's plans for a military blockade of Cuba and for intercepting any foreign-flag ship attempting to reach the island republic. The newspapers withheld publication at the request of President Kennedy. The crisis was resolved by a Soviet agreement to remove missiles emplaced on Cuban territory in return for an American pledge that there would be no repetition of the 1961 invasion attempt.

In the 1961 incident, United States involvement in the aborted invasion of a sovereign state was in clear violation of international law. In the 1962 incident, the Soviet Union was clearly within its rights in placing missiles in Cuba, at the invitation of the Cuban government and under Cuban control, however distasteful it may have been to the government of the United States. The bristling reaction to the missiles (to this day there has been no precise description of their potential) was outrageous in view of the fact that hundreds of American missiles had been placed close to the borders of the Soviet Union.

Beyond this, Drew Pearson reported on October 26, 1962, that the missile crisis had been engendered in Washington by the Kennedy administration to shore up its political prospects in the November 1962 elections against Republican charges that it was being soft on communism "ninety miles from our shores." And Max Frankel in the *New York Times* of October 23, 1962, indicated that one compelling reason for the need for secrecy about Washington's plans was fear that the Soviet Union might take the matter to the United Nations and undercut the effect of Kennedy's ultimatum—an ultimatum which could have led to war between the United States and the Soviet Union. As late as 1966 the *Times* was still justifying its suppression of the missile crisis story.[9]

There is a connection between the Cuban events and those of June 1971. The Boston *Globe* sent Crocker Snow, assistant managing editor, to New York during the first week of the publication of the documents to find out how and why the *Times's* decision to publish was reached, and how the staff felt about it. Snow determined that there was a "curious relationship" between the June 1971 decision and the one taken years earlier at the time of the Bay of Pigs. He recalled Kennedy's hindsight comment to *Times* executive editor Turner Catledge: "If you had printed more about the [Bay of Pigs] operation, you would have saved us from a colossal mistake."

Had this "embarrassing memory" played a part in the decision to publish the Pentagon documents? Snow asked. Very little, said the editors. One told Snow:

"This is a very, very different thing. These are basically historical documents, and the Cuban stories were about pending missions. I can say honestly that if this secret material now had been about ongoing missions, then we wouldn't have used it." This confirms the editorial comment in the *Times* quoted earlier.

The mind conjures the image of an ashen editorial writer, sitting at a charred typewriter, painfully recording that, in retrospect, the decision to drop an atomic bomb on Peking, in retaliation for the defeat of the American Ping-Pong team by the Chinese at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, was poorly conceived. The *Times,* the editorial would say, had information that a contingency plan for the preemptive retaliatory protective reaction strike was in existence, but withheld the information because it concerned ongoing policy, and disclosure might endanger the life of even one American airman.

While this fantasy may seem absurd to some, the reality was less absurd to thousands of Indochinese whose charred remains continued to pile up in a noncontingent pattern as a result of ongoing United States policy whose underlying principles were still accepted by an overwhelming majority of the communications media. Who then will blow the whistle on this policy in the genuine national interest?

The Pentagon Papers demonstrated that government not only refuses to give out information but also lies and distorts the facts. Is it not, therefore, the responsibility of newspapers and television networks to make the record public when they are persuaded that a planned government action could bring the nation up to or over the brink of an illegal, immoral, and disastrous war? This is not to argue that the media in a wartime situation should have published in advance, say, the date of the invasion of Normandy in World War II. There are of course situations when security must be maintained. The publication by the Chicago *Tribune* in World War II of the information that the United States had broken the Japanese naval code was reprehensible.

But Cuba is another matter. We were not at war with Cuba. We simply wanted to smash its revolution, and the media was in general accord with this policy. And Indochina is another matter. War has never been declared there, and a majority of Americans has finally concluded that the United States must extricate itself. If the government persists in thwarting the public will, do not the media have a responsibility to intervene in behalf of the public? If they do not, who will?

"Who elected the *New York Times* to get into the game? some people ask," James Reston wrote on June 20, 1971, "and the answer is nobody but the men who wrote the First Amendment to the Constitution." A fair answer, and one Reston might have given to himself when he advised his publisher not to publish the facts about the Bay of Pigs invasion (Reston still refers to the CIA's Cubans as "freedom fighters") and the missile crisis. But the answer implies something more than responsibility in hindsight.

"The political game as it is now played in Washington is like a football game without boundaries, rules, or officials," Reston declared in the same article. "All the men in the press box can do is report the shambles." Poorly stated. The men who drew up and fought for the First Amendment privileges and protections for the press did so precisely because they sought to prevent the shambles from occurring. In Reston's metaphor, they wanted the press to guard the stadium gates like watchdogs to prevent the crooked managers, the fixed players, and the blood-money gamblers from taking over.

The *Times* was a toothless watchdog when Coach Eisenhower's Washington All-Stars were playing Russian Roulette in their U-2 spy planes over the Soviet

Union in 1960, and before. Several *Times* editors later conceded that the *Times* knew all about this dangerous game, but published nothing about it. Premier Khrushchev made his famous U-2 accusation just before a scheduled summit conference with President Eisenhower in Paris in May 1960—a conference called to advance the "spirit of Camp David" supposedly established during Khrushchev's visit to the United States the year before.

The sainted Eisenhower, the nearest miss to General Washington the nation has ever had, lied about the U-2s, and the *Times* soberly published his lies—even though it knew the facts. The press in general decreed that Khrushchev did not want to talk peace anyway. Then Khrushchev produced the photographs of the U-2 wreckage and mug shots of pilot Gary Powers. The Paris conference broke up before it had begun, an Eisenhower trip to the Soviet Union was canceled. The game was called on account of international darkness, and the nation slid back into Reston's Cold War shambles. *That* is the most dangerous game of all, and the *Times* was an accomplice before and after the fact because it did not genuinely subscribe to the public's right to know.

In January 1972 an incident occurred which seemingly put to test the question whether the most prestigious newspapers of the country would alter their policy of not publishing government documents about ongoing or future policy. The episode acquired the name "the Anderson Papers," after Jack Anderson, the Washington-based muckraker whose column appears in 700 newspapers. In his column of January 3 Anderson wrote that he had come into possession of secret summaries of White House meetings of December 3, 4, and 6 disclosing a firmer anti-India attitude by the United States government than had been made public during and following the India-Pakistan dispute over East Pakistan. The creation of the state of Bangladesh had followed the Indian invasion of East Pakistan.

Much of the information in the Anderson columns pictured White House adviser Henry M. Kissinger as the President's chief spokesman in the matter. Kissinger insisted that Anderson had "wrenched" the information "out of context." Anderson, to prove his contention, thereupon released the full text of memoranda of the White House meetings, and they were published on January 5 by the Washington *Post* and the New York *Post*. The *New York Times* asked Anderson for the documents and published them in full on January 6. The Washington *Post* described Anderson's actions as "an undoubted contribution to the public's right to know."

While the documents undoubtedly did shed light on the insular arrogance with which policy decisions are reached, they added little to the public's knowledge of United States attitudes toward India and Pakistan—attitudes whose bias against India was clearly evident in United States actions and comments at the United Nations, and in statements by the White House and the State Department. Further, in any comparison with the Pentagon Papers, it should be noted that the documents were turned over to Anderson *from within the government*—and there is considerable reason to believe that the leak was motivated not so much by concern for the public's right to know, as by jealousy and dissension among warring factions within the administration. It was common knowledge in Washington that both the State Department and the Defense Department had long resented Kissinger's "running the government from the White House basement," and the Anderson coup had all the earmarks of a palace intrigue to "get" Kissinger.

While Anderson may be credited with nobler motives in making the information public, an examination of the administration's public statements on India and the secret documents revealed differences only in degree and intensity. Comparisons with the Pentagon documents fall noticeably short. Neither in content nor in significance do the two sets of documents compare. Furthermore, by the time the documents were published, Bangladesh was a fait accompli. In the last analysis, the Anderson papers did not test the willingness of the press to publish major documents about current or future policy.

The leadership of the *Times* nationally was demonstrated by the chain reaction following its publication of the first of the Pentagon Papers. In rapid order, the documents began to appear in the Washington *Post,* Boston *Globe,* Chicago *Sun-Times,* the Knight newspapers, Los Angeles *Times,* St. Louis *Post-Dispatch, Newsday* of Long Island, and the *Christian Science Monitor.* Granted by then it was too sensational a story to suppress, there was much more involved. It was evident that those newspapers generally regarded as the most responsible understood they had a common and compelling necessity to support one another in the face of an unprecedented government attempt at "prior restraint"—that is, action taken to prevent the publication of a news story or transcripts of documents.

This was the problem that confronted the editors (and the legal department, which sometimes overrules or supplants the editors) at the *Times* in the three months during which they had possession of the documents and weighed their decision to publish or not to publish. The atmosphere at the *Times* and in the surrounding mid-Manhattan area could have been appropriate for an elaborate spy melodrama. Men and women were spirited out of the *Times* building in West 43rd Street to set up secret headquarters at the Hotel Hilton, their privacy protected by *Times* company guards (eventually the *Times* had nine rooms on two floors of the hotel). Special secret composing rooms were established with only trusted typesetters admitted. Questions as to the whereabouts of missing Washington bureau men were met with "Don't ask."

In Washington there were similar scenes at the *Post,* of briefer duration but perhaps of even greater intensity. There an all-night battle between the "business side" and the "editorial side" at the home of executive editor Benjamin Bradlee ended with a victory by the editorial side to publish.

First reactions in the newspaper world were marked by indolence and ineptitude and, in many areas, caution. The Times News Service, with 300 clients, alerted its subscribers on the afternoon of June 12 (Saturday) that it would move a major story at 6 P.M. The Louisville *Courier-Journal* gave prominent place to the story, but the Chicago *Tribune* ignored it. UPI did not send a story out until Sunday afternoon, and AP waited until Monday afternoon (both services are permitted to pick up stories from member newspapers immediately). Neither *Time* nor *Newsweek* remade their pages on Saturday night, although there was time.

The television networks handled the story even more casually. ABC put the *Times* story aside to read at a future time. At CBS, during the "Face the Nation" program on Sunday with Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird (who had been briefed by Attorney General Mitchell as to his possible replies), neither the CBS correspondent nor the *New York Times* man on the program asked a single question concerning the documents. Only NBC realized the significance of the story and devoted almost half of the time of its Sunday evening news to it.

In general, however, the performance of the television networks was limited in the weeks that followed. While they covered the legal battles and the Ellsberg involvement fully, they paid scant attention to the content of the documents, and it was not until the end of December 1971 that any network devoted any appreciable time to the papers themselves. That was the two-hour program "Vietnam Hindsight," produced by NBC and devoted mainly to the origins of American involvement and the events leading to the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem on November 2, 1963.

But a high degree of excitement was engendered in the last two weeks of June, particularly about the question of freedom of the press and the interpretation of the First Amendment. And the excitement was warranted. Never before in the history of the country had the issue of "prior restraint" been raised in terms of legal action and pursued through the courts by the government—not even during the two-year period in which the Alien and Sedition acts were in force from 1798 to 1800. Even these acts invoked postpublication penalties, and they expired before the Supreme Court was able to rule on the constitutional issues.

A proper question to be asked at this juncture is this: If the Congress is forbidden by the First Amendment from enacting legislation in the area of freedom of the press, by what right did the Executive branch intervene to ask the Judiciary to act, and by what right did the courts accede to the Executive's requests? There was a sharp exchange on this point during the Supreme Court hearing on June 26, 1971, between Justice Douglas, an unyielding advocate of absolute interpretation of First Amendment freedoms, and, surprisingly, the attorney representing the *Times*, Alexander M. Bickel of Yale Law School.

Bickel argued that the courts might have the power to restrain the press if Congress passed a law specifically authorizing it to do so. Justice Douglas looked up sharply from his note-taking and said: "The First Amendment says that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of the press. Are you saying that Congress can make some laws abridging freedom of the press? [That] is a very strange argument for the *Times* to make that all this can be done if Congress passes a law." Bickel wisely made no response.

It was indeed a strange argument on behalf of a newspaper petitioning to lift the judicial restraining order against continuing publication of the Pentagon documents. It was even more strange in view of the position taken by four justices against accepting *certiorari* (review) on the ground that, because of the First Amendment's clear language, the court had no jurisdiction in the case.

A head-on test of this principle might have occurred if the *Times* had ignored the initial injunction in the Federal District Court in New York and continued publication of the documents. But the *Times*, as a newspaper which abides by the "rule of law," was not willing to make the challenge; nor, it seems, was any other newspaper. However one might have hoped for such a challenge, it was not logical to expect it from newspapers which have consistently rebuked demonstrators for "going outside the law."

There was another alternative for the *Times*: It could have published the entire set of documents in one issue and thus rendered moot the issue of prior restraint—at least in the Pentagon Papers case. But newspapers, however much they may protest that they are a public service, are profit-making enterprises. The *Times*'s circulation had been declining at a fairly steady rate through 1971. Here was a chance to recoup some losses through a series of articles spread over a period of time with tremendous impact. It would hardly be speculative to suggest that hard heads in the countinghouse prevailed over softer ones in the editorial department.

What was the long-range meaning of the Supreme Court's decision to permit the *Times* to continue publication? Perhaps the soundest answer came from one of the nation's leading authorities on constitutional law, Thomas I. Emerson of Yale Law School.[10] He wrote:

> The result was certainly favorable to a free press. Put the other way, a contrary result would have been a disaster. It would have made the press subject to a very considerable extent of advance restriction. It would have changed the whole relationship between the press and government. The outcome was a sound outcome. On the other hand, the legal theory that the court adopted is, I think, cause for concern.
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> Only three justices came out strongly against a system of prior restraint—Black, Douglas and Brennan, and Brennan would make some narrow exceptions. Black and Douglas apparently permitted none. Justice Marshall probably would go along with them, but actually he based his opinion on a different ground—that Congress had denied the power to the President, and the Court therefore did not get into the question. But if you assume there were four who would vigorously apply the doctrine of no previous restraint, nevertheless there were five whose opinions seriously undermine the doctrine against prior restraint. Certainly the three dissenters would have made exceptions, but also Justices White and Stewart announced that any anticipated publication which raised an immediate danger to national security would be grounds for an injunction, and the dissenting justices would have gone at least that far.

There were two major problems, as Emerson saw the decision: (1) The specified exception—that advance restraint of a newspaper was proper if the government proved a grave and immediate breach of national security—is a wide-open exception which would probably allow the government to obtain an injunction in most cases where the question of national security was raised; (2) if the courts ultimately interpret the concept of "grave and immediate breach of national security" rather narrowly, the very application of the rule would constitute a system of prior restraint because it would hold up publication while the courts investigated whether there was indeed a breach of security.

Emerson found the media to be in a vulnerable position. The rapid changes in the Supreme Court, tilting the balance distinctly toward the restrictive Nixon-Mitchell view of civil liberties, made the position of the media even more vulnerable. On this point, Emerson had some advice for the media in seeking allies to protect its freedom:

> I would say that one of the main things that the media can do is to educate the public to the significance of the whole system of free expression. . . . The *New York Times* case has opened up the possibility of making people aware of what the role of the press is: that its role isn't simply to take handouts given by the government; it's for the people.
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> The major problem with the system of freedom of the press today is the inability of many points of view to find an outlet. That is a very serious problem. I think that it is important for the media to be aware of that, to anticipate it, to try to take account of it. In other words, just as I think the government ought to subsidize an opposition to itself, in a sense monopolistic elements in the communications industry should subsidize some opposition to themselves. I think it would be a much healthier and ultimately more successful system.

It was unlikely that either the government or the communications industry would give serious heed to Emerson's Jeffersonian counsel. In the more than two years during which the Nixon administration had sought to pressure the communications industry to cast off even its tepid adversary role *vis-à-vis* government, the industry to a large extent played the artful dodger, yielding a bit here, making a tentative thrust there, but generally avoiding a direct confrontation with the government. The publication of the Pentagon Papers altered the situation, but subsequent events have not demonstrated that the communications industry has absorbed the obvious lesson of the Pentagon Papers—that the only proper role of the media is not as partner to government, but as spokesman and forum for an enlightened and informed public opinion which it should help to create.

In the first days after the documents were published, there was a heartening closing of ranks to resist the abrogation of the First Amendment—for that is what it had come down to. The directors of NBC and CBS, themselves under governmental siege, voiced their support of the newspapers. ABC, concentrating on a "happy news" approach in accord with the Agnew syndrome, was silent.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors joined the fight, as did the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, the Newspaper Guild, and *Editor & Publisher,* the generally stodgy journal of the newspaper industry. The Boston *Globe* recalled the dark days of the witch-hunting, black-listing 1950s with a warning that it could happen again. Its political editor Robert Healy wrote: "After all, the issue is not simply the right [of newspapers] to publish these documents, but the right of the people to read them."

The classic arrogant response to this position was given by General Maxwell Taylor, who served in the deceit elite of both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and therefore was a person of prominence in the Pentagon documents. On the question of "the people's right to know," he said:

> I don't believe in this as a general principle. You have to talk about cases. What is a citizen going to do after reading these documents that he wouldn't have done otherwise? A citizen should know the things he needs to know to be a good citizen and discharge his functions, but not to get into secrets that damage his government and indirectly damage himself.

The disclosures, he said, were laying the foundations for "bad history." That meant, in plain English, that it would make the central figures in the drama—Taylor among them—look bad. And that, at all costs, particularly at the cost of truth, had to be avoided. Opposed to the Taylor view, Tom Wicker wrote in the *New York Times* on June 16, 1971: "No statute exists that says that government officials must be protected from the exposure of their follies or misdeeds. Indeed, the great lesson of the Pentagon record is that the ability to operate in secrecy breeds contempt for that very public in whose name and interest officials claim to act."

That is a great lesson indeed, but it applies to the newspapers which refused to publish information in their possession during the years of the Pentagon Papers, as well as the government officials who sought to keep secret their policymaking actions. For the communications media it ought to have meant a continuing effort to tear the shroud of secrecy and misinformation from every area of governmental policymaking, and particularly about the seemingly endless war in Indochina. But after a period of vigorous self-congratulation, the media lost interest altogether in the contents of the Pentagon documents, especially as to the light they might cast on current policy and actions, and resorted to their customary way of doing things.

Body counts and kill ratios still dominated the news stories from Indochina, and "Hanoi" was credited with all "enemy" military actions in Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam. Missing from the media—and from the American consciousness—was any recognition of the role of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the Cambodian National Liberation Front, and the Pathet Lao, the liberation movement of Laos, each of which is in control of the major portion of its respective country, and each of which in fact is opposing the forces of the United States and their mercenary troops—not "Hanoi."

When the bombings of North Vietnam were resumed in force late in 1971, and administration spokesmen, in language which could have been taken verbatim from the Pentagon documents, sought to justify the bombings, the media reported the explanations without contest in the traditionally objective fashion. An enterprising newspaper could have laid the official statements side by side with similar statements from the Pentagon documents, and the point would have been sharply underscored. But such enterprise was not countenanced, if it ever was proposed.

Even more striking was the treatment in the media, and particularly the *New York Times,* of the man whose initiative, enterprise, and single-minded purpose enabled the publication of the Pentagon documents. On August 5, 1971, Daniel Ellsberg was ordered by a United States District judge in Boston to be removed to California to face charges of illegal possession of secret government documents. The *Times,* one felt, would regard itself as personally involved—with due regard for the need to protect its own legal position—and deem this news worthy of page one display. It decided, however, to place the story (ten inches of type) on page six of its August 6 issue.

An Appeals Court held up the extradition order on August 6, and the *Times* on August 7 moved the story up to page four (thirteen inches). Ellsberg was not in court in Portland, Maine, where the action took place, but held a news conference in Boston, and made some statements which could provide a motive for his relegation to the *Times*'s inside pages. He said he was disappointed that the newspapers were not printing more of the Pentagon documents. "The *New York Times* and the Washington *Post* have most of the papers," he said, "but the public doesn't have them. I have to say this means many newspapers in this country which have access to large sections of the Pentagon study are now in the business of withholding it from the public, just as the Defense Department was for so long in that business."

That was a strong enough statement to elicit comment from the *Times* or the Washington *Post,* but none was forthcoming. In fact, Ellsberg dropped out of the *Times* for the rest of the week, and its News of the Week in Review, on Sunday, August 8, did not consider his situation of sufficient interest for an item in the review, let alone for editorial comment.

Coverage of the Ellsberg case did improve in the *Times* after the second indictments by a grand jury in Los Angeles in December 1971, but an examination of the *Times*'s editorials from June through December 1971 yielded only one comment about the Ellsberg case. That was an editorial critical of the government's use of wiretapping in pursuing persons in the academic community who may have sympathized with or assisted Ellsberg's efforts to make the Pentagon documents public.

The *Boston Globe* was prematurely accurate in describing the climate surrounding the Pentagon Papers' publication as similar to that of the 1950s, "when intellectuals, Hollywood writers, professors and labor leaders were being summoned before a congressional committee and then being judged in contempt because they refused to answer questions about their alleged Communist beliefs."

Substitute the words "grand jury" for "congressional committee," and "Ellsberg connections" for "Communist beliefs," and one has a fair picture of the atmosphere on East Coast and West Coast at the turn of 1972.

Even the most vigorous efforts—if they were indeed to be made—by the media to ensure a fair trial for Ellsberg and the others who were indicted, or may still be, could not absolve the media of their responsibility in the situation. That could be achieved only by an acknowledgment that the wrong persons were being placed on trial, and that the government's efforts were a diversion to delude the public once again as to the real nature of the American crisis.

In the *New York Times* of June 13, 1971—the day the first of the documents appeared—James Reston described as persons of "unquestioned personal moral character" Secretary of Defense McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Walt W. Rostow, and the Bundy brothers. It is a strange characterization for men engaged for years in the process of deliberately deceiving the American public in order to continue killing both Indochinese and Americans to prove the correctness of their policy.

As of January 1972, all of these moral men were still active in public life. McNamara—with a second five-year term—was presiding over the billions in the World Bank; Rusk was teaching history to unsuspecting young people at a Southern university; McGeorge Bundy was distributing Ford Foundation largess as chairman of the board; brother William had been confirmed (by David Rockefeller) as editor of *Foreign Affairs,* a journal which seeks to present American foreign policy in its most benevolent light; Rostow was heavily engaged at the University of Texas (sometimes known as the University of Lyndon B. Johnson) in Austin, presenting to history as a benign democrat one of the grossest men ever to achieve the Presidency.

All the high-minded editorials about the inviolability of the First Amendment and the "vitality of the American form of government" (*New York Times* editorial, July 4, 1971) notwithstanding, the communications industry will have abdicated its responsibility completely unless it seeks an answer to the compelling question: How could these things be? If the industry does not stand united in an adversary role to government—the only proper stance for a free press in a democracy—there will be ever greater incursions on its freedoms, and the freedoms of others. Ultimately, the public may be left without a major defense of its interests against predatory government.

And a Berrigan will still be in jail.

Notes

1. In a paper prepared for delivery at the 66th annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Los Angeles in September 1970; and in an article in *The Nation,* October 11, 1971, part of an essay to be included in *Communications in International Politics,* edited by Richard I. Merritt (University of Illinois Press).

2. At the height of the controversy about Diem, only the Associated Press, the United Press International, and the *New York Times* had full-time correspondents in South Vietnam. When a major story broke, a stream of correspondents poured in from Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Bangkok. Neil Sheehan was then correspondent for UPI, Malcolm Browne for AP, and Charles Mohr was Southeast Asia bureau chief for *Time.* With David Halberstam, who succeeded Homer Bigart for the *New York Times,* they comprised the group of journalistic rebels whose dispatches were contradicted by junketeering correspondents such as Joseph Alsop and Marguerite Higgins of the New York

Herald Tribune, sent out to Vietnam for that purpose. By July 1966, there were 360 accredited correspondents in South Vietnam, about a third of them actual reporters, the rest technicians, interpreters, and CIA agents.

3. In a perceptive review of Roger Hilsman's *To Move a Nation* (Doubleday, 1967), in *The Nation,* June 5, 1967.

4. In *The Making of a Quagmire* (Random House, 1965).

5. In an article entitled "Not a Dove, But No Longer a Hawk," in the *New York Times Magazine,* October 9, 1966.

6. Between 1945 and 1950, specialists connected with the Institute of Pacific Relations, a prime McCarthy target, reviewed twenty-two of thirty books about China for the *New York Times,* and thirty of thirty-five books for the New York *Herald Tribune.* From 1952 to 1955, the years of McCarthyite prevalence, not one of these authorities was engaged to review a single book by either the *Times* or the *Herald Tribune.* These figures are from Roger Hilsman's *To Move a Nation.*

7. In the *Progressive,* August 1971. Knoll is Washington editor of the *Progressive,* and coauthor with William McGaffin of *Anything But the Truth* (G. P. Putnam's, 1968), about the credibility gap in Washington.

8. Stone ceased publication of his newsletter with the issue of December 14, 1971, to become a contributing editor of the *New York Review of Books.* The *Weekly* is available on microfilm from University Microfilms, a subsidiary of Xerox.

9. In a speech by Clifton Daniel, *Times* managing editor, on June 1, 1966, to the World Press Institute at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and printed the next day in full in the *Times.*

10. In the *Columbia Journalism Review* (September/October 1971), an issue devoted almost entirely to the media and the Pentagon documents.

5. The Receiving End [1]

by Wilfred Burchett

"It is repugnant for honest people to think that the government of a country with the standing of the United States had, for many years, premeditated, prepared, and planned, down to the most minute details, systematic aggression; a criminal war of genocide and biocide against a small people, a small country situated 10,000 kilometers and more from America's frontiers; to think that this government for many years on end has deliberately and knowingly lied to cover up the crime, to hide its plans and deceive American public opinion, the American Congress, and America's allies as well as its friends and supporters throughout the world.

"When American presidents declare that all they want is peace; that they will never commit aggression; that they will never resort to force; that all they want is to defend democracy and freedom in Vietnam; any amount of people throughout the world had difficulty in believing that this was nothing but sheer lies and, even worse, cynical cover-ups for the most detailed preparations and plans for war. Decent people thought there must be at least a modicum of truth and sincerity in the word of leaders of one of the most important governments in the world. They thought there must be much propaganda in the accusations of the 'other side' against the White House and the Pentagon.

"Today, it is high time to inspect the evidence. The truth has been flushed out into broad daylight. The official documents, notes, minutes of working sessions, directives, circulars—in all 7,000 pages, 2,500,000 words, reveal in black and white the extent of the plot and the lies. . . .[2]

"For over 20 years, Yankee imperialism fixed its prey, spread its nets, set its traps, orchestrated its propaganda, launched the necessary provocations to end up by hurling over 11 million tons of bombs at Vietnam and casting $200 billion into the Indochina abyss. . . . Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, finally Nixon—Democrats and Republicans, one can hardly imagine more dissimilar personalities—have succeeded each other, but Washington's Vietnam and Indochina policy has not deviated an iota.

"Events have unfolded as in a scenario prepared by a one-track–mind producer. The most murderous weapons have been tried out; the most barbarous forms of warfare employed; the most bloodthirsty minions utilized and, when necessary, physically liquidated when they outlived their usefulness.

"For the Vietnamese people who saw the first US warships arrive in Saigon waters in March 1950 and from then on saw US military missions at work, followed by swarms of Yankee 'advisers' of all types, followed in turn by hordes of GIs, the Pentagon Papers merely confirm the opinion about Yankee imperialism that they have consistently held for 20-odd years. For the Vietnamese, La-

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otian, and Cambodian peoples, as for all those who have had to face up to Yankee imperialism in recent years, these documents hardly constitute real secrets. For we have had to judge the men in Washington by their deeds, not by their speeches; and the sequence and logic of these acts amply proved the true nature of Yankee imperialism.

"When dealing with matters such as the death of Diem, the refusal to hold the 1956 elections, the 'Tonkin Gulf incident,' or the eventual use of nuclear weapons, these documents certainly do not reveal everything. There is still plenty to be said! But the essential is there. The policy of intervention, the aggression waged by Washington with great obduracy and duplicity against Vietnam and the peoples of Indochina. . . ."

This must be taken only as a preliminary reaction from Hanoi—in late September 1971—based on what the North Vietnamese had seen and heard of the Pentagon Papers till that date. It was before the Senator Gravel edition or the Government edition had been published and doubtless much more will be heard from Hanoi when those much more complete texts have been studied.

It is quite true that there is still "plenty to be said"; many things have been omitted which provide vital clues to understanding the real import of the Papers. The documents "hardly constitute real secrets" for those of us present at the receiving end of these policies and who have dug hard for confirmatory data from the initiating end. McNamara's researchers seem to have missed quite a lot of confirmatory data available even in the memoirs of qualified Establishment higher-ups. For instance, although the Papers deal in detail with contingency plans for joint or unilateral U.S. military intervention from the period of the Dien Bien Phu battle right up to the 11th hour of the 1954 Geneva Cease-fire Agreements, they do not deal with very firm plans, drawn up immediately after Geneva for a unilateral United States invasion of North Vietnam and the occupation of the Red River Delta up to, and including Hanoi, for a start. As a "declaration of intention" and an explanation of what followed, this is crucial. A major participant in this planning, Brigadier General James M. Gavin, in a book that attracted comparatively little attention, reveals the whole plot. Gavin, at the time of which he writes, was Deputy in Charge of Plans to General Matthew B. Ridgway, Army Chief of Staff.[3]

After the French "unwisely folded" by signing the 1954 Geneva Agreements, Gavin reveals, the Pentagon view, supported by John Foster Dulles and the CIA, was that "it was obviously up to us to assume the full burden of combat against Communism in that area. . . ." It was in this spirit, he continues, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff "began with the highest priority to study a proposal to send combat troops into the Red River delta of North Vietnam. . . ."

It is later made quite clear that this planning started immediately after the Geneva Agreements, which in the Pentagon view, represented an unpleasant interruption in the business of "stopping Communism" for which the United States had been footing the bills till then but would now have to take over the actual fighting.

"As Chief of Plans of the Army Staff," continues Gavin, "I was responsible for recommending what attitude the Army should take towards this proposal to put American ground troops into North Vietnam. . . ." In his consultations, Gavin and his colleagues, including "the best Asian experts," concluded that in invading North Vietnam they would also be taking on China. The Navy made this quite clear by pointing out that they could not guarantee safety for the invasion force unless they first occupied the Chinese island of Hainan. After a visit to the area, Gavin came to the conclusion that the invasion would require "eight combat divisions supported by 35 engineering battalions and all the artillery and logistics support such mammoth undertakings require. . . ."

The fact that the United States had pledged not to use force or "threat of force" to upset the Geneva Agreements seems not to have entered into the considerations of the planners. As for the danger of war with China:

> Admiral Radford [then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, W.B.] was emphatically in favor of landing a force in the Haiphong-Hanoi area, even if it meant risking war with Red China. In this he was fully supported by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Naval Operations [continued Gavin]. In my opinion such an operation meant a great risk of war. . . . The Navy was unwilling to risk their ships in the Haiphong area without first invading and capturing the island. Admiral Radford and the Chiefs of the Navy and Air Force felt that, faced with overwhelming power, the Red Chinese would not react to this violation of their sovereignty. General Ridgway and I had grave doubts about the validity of this reasoning. . . ."

Ridgway, with his Korean experience (a) in getting involved with Chinese troops in a ground war and (b) the ineffectiveness of air power in such wars, was against the plan. He went over the head of Radford directly to President Eisenhower and as a result the proposal was killed. By everything that Gavin writes, this was not just a bit of "contingency planning" but a real plan of war which had "highest priority" and could not have been initiated without Eisenhower's support. Gavin makes it clear that he and Ridgway had the greatest difficulty in getting the plan canceled. He refers to "weeks and months" during which "we were to argue forcefully and frequently against such a war. . . ."

How such a war would have been justified, Gavin does not reveal. But the later fakery with the "Tonkin Gulf" incident proved that pretexts are no problem once the decision has been made! The war, for the moment, was called off. But Gavin points out there was a "compromise." There would be a "Vietnamization" of the plans. "We would not attack North Vietnam," Gavin continues, "but we would support a South Vietnamese government that we hoped would provide a stable, independent government that was representative of the people. . . ." Here Gavin was writing with his tongue in his cheek. The "compromise" as he knew full well was that the United States would place a military machine in the hands of Ngo Dinh Diem that would do what Eisenhower had thwarted Dulles, the CIA, and Pentagon from doing in 1954. Why this vital link in the chain of intentions is omitted from the Pentagon Papers, when there is so much frankness on other matters, is difficult to understand. It makes so many other things comprehensible. What followed in the South was preparation for the "March to the North." The United States took over the training and build-up of Diem's forces; graduates at the training schools pledged to "march to the North" and were issued shoulder flashes bearing this motto. Gavin reveals that following the abandonment of the earlier war plan he was sent to Saigon "early in 1955 . . . to discuss political and economic plans plus military aid and assistance. . . ."

As far as I know—and I was in the North from October 1954 until May 1957—Ho Chi Minh was not aware of the Dulles-Radford plan, but he was aware of secret aggression against the North, immediately after the Geneva Accords went into effect. The North Vietnamese were aware of the American hand behind false rumors—such as those, spread by a Lansdale team, of Chinese troops raping

North Vietnamese girls—and the propaganda campaign to scare Catholics into fleeing to the South to escape the A-bombs which would be used against the "pagans" who remained in the North. Many of Lansdale's agents deserted—as he admits—the moment they set foot in the North, so the Vietnamese were well aware of his activities—if not of his personality, and those of his psywar, espionage, and sabotage teams as detailed in Document 95 [Gravel edition, I:573–583].

By accident I personally stumbled on evidence of their activities at the Hongay-Campha coal-mining area. It was toward the end of the 300-day period during which the French were allowed to retain an enclave around Haiphong port through which their forces were gradually to be evacuated to the South. (Three hundred days from the signing of the Geneva Agreements was the period provided for completing the regrouping of both sides' armed forces north and south of the 17th parallel respectively, and also for civilians who wished to change their place of residence.) At the coal mines, I was told of a strange incident just before the French pulled out to Haiphong, in which a sharp-eyed youngster had noticed a mysterious visitor who fumbled around the stacks of coal briquettes at the Campha storing area. At first he thought it was just someone helping himself to fuel. Then he noticed that the visitor—who always turned up in the evenings—was putting briquettes into the stacks. When an advanced guard of Vietminh troops arrived he reported this. A watch was kept and the visitor grabbed. His "briquettes" were the same size and shape but less shiny than the others. They were found to be made of powerful explosives. Fed into locomotive engines or powerhouse and factory furnaces, they would have caused tremendous damage with no way of tracing the source.

The Campha culprit admitted that he was one of a number of French undercover agents in the North who had been recruited by the CIA immediately after the Geneva Agreements, whisked off to a U.S. base on a Pacific island for a crash-course in espionage-sabotage techniques and infiltrated back into the North through the Haiphong enclave. While I was at Campha, teams were still patiently combing through the mountains of briquettes to collect the explosive dummies. My Vietnamese friends asked me not to write about it at the time because they did not want Lansdale to know how much they already knew of his activities.

In his report, Lansdale recounts with some pride how one of his teams "had spent the last days of Hanoi in contaminating the oil supply of the bus company for a gradual wreckage of engines in the buses, in taking the first actions of a delayed sabotage of the railroad (which required teamwork with a CIA special technical team in Japan who performed their part brilliantly) and in writing detailed notes of potential targets for future paramilitary operations. . . ." Lansdale complains that U.S. adherence to the Geneva Agreements prevented his teams "from carrying out the active sabotage it desired to do against the power plant, water facilities, harbor and bridge. . . ." (Those jobs were done later by the U.S. Air Force!!!) It is worth noting that the sabotage of the bus company was specifically aimed at the French concept of economic coexistence with the DRV, the bus company being owned and staffed by French personnel. The "first actions" for delayed sabotage of the railroad were undoubtedly the planting of the explosive "briquettes"!

"By 31 January [1955]" reported Lansdale, all operational equipment of the Binh paramilitary group had been trans-shipped to Haiphong from Saigon. . . . We had smuggled into Vietnam about eight and a half tons of supplies for the paramilitary group. They included fourteen agent radios, 300 carbines, 90,000 rounds of carbine ammunition, 50 pistols, 10,000 rounds of pistol ammunition and 300 pounds of explosives. Two and a half tons were delivered to the Hao[1] agents in Tonkin, while the remainder was cached along the Red River by SMM (Saigon Military Mission which Lansdale headed. W.B.) with the help of the Navy. . . ."

A reason repeatedly given years later by Washington for not engaging in negotiations to end America's war in Vietnam was that they could not place any reliance in "agreements reached with Communists." Walter Bedell-Smith at the closing session of the 1954 Geneva Conference solemnly stated that: "The Government of the United States of America declares that with regard to the aforesaid Agreements and paragraphs that: 1) it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article 2 (Section 4) of the Charter of the United Nations. . . . 2) It would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."

"Haiphong was taken over by the Vietminh on 16 May," continues the Lansdale report. "Our Binh and northern Hao teams were in place, completely equipped. It had taken a tremendous amount of hard work to beat the Geneva deadline, to locate, exfiltrate, train, infiltrate, equip the men of these two teams and have them in place ready for actions required against the enemy. . . ." In other words in place ready for "the use of force to disturb" the Geneva Agreements.

For a comparison of attitudes, one only has to study Ho Chi Minh's "Appeal to the Vietnamese People" on June 22, 1954, the day after the Geneva Cease-fire Accords were signed. It can be imagined that fulfilling that part of the agreement calling for the evacuation of old Vietminh resistance bases in the South—some of which the French had never been able to penetrate from the start of the resistance struggle—called for a special effort of discipline and self-sacrifice which only the authority of Ho Chi Minh could make acceptable. Families would be separated for the two years until reunification; the local people would lose the protection the Vietminh had for so long provided. After explaining that the Geneva Agreements represented a "brilliant victory" for the resistance struggle, Ho Chi Minh set the new task as: "to struggle to consolidate peace: to realize national unity, independence and democracy. To restore peace, the two parties must first of all observe the cease-fire. For that, it is important that the armed forces of both parties regroup in two different regions, which means that the limits of both regrouping zones must be well marked. Such delimitation is a temporary measure, a transition indispensable to the good implementation of the military agreement and to the restoration of peace with a view to the nationwide elections for the reunification of the country. . . ." He explained that some areas occupied till then by the French would now be in the liberated zone north of the 17th parallel and some areas liberated in the South would fall under temporary French occupation.

"I am asking all our compatriots, combatants and cadres, to strictly adhere to the political line drawn up by the Party and Government and to correctly apply the measures taken in our struggle to consolidate peace, realize unity, independence and democracy.

"All of you, truthful patriots, no matter to what social class you belong, no matter what God you believe in, no matter what side you were with, I invite you all to cooperate frankly in the struggle for the sake of the people and of the Nation, for peace, for the unity, independence and democracy of our beloved Vietnam. . . ."

These were sacred instructions for every Vietminh cadre. Some 140,000 of them—military and civilian—were then withdrawn to the North, in accordance with the regrouping procedures agreed to at Geneva to separate the combatant forces.

Whereas Ho Chi Minh accepted the Geneva Agreement as a solemn international treaty to be respected no matter what the sacrifices involved, Eisenhower treated it as a hindrance, to be circumvented by any means whatsoever, to American global plans to "stop communism." Thus the North Vietnamese are right in seeing one single scenario from March 16, 1950—when the U.S. aircraft-carrier *Boxer* and the destroyers *Sticknel* and *Anderson*, under 7th Fleet Commander, Rear Admiral Arleigh Burke, anchored in Saigon Harbor in support of the French, through the Lansdale "cloak and dagger" operations—right up to the 11 million tons of bombs on Vietnam and U.S. aggression extended to Laos and Cambodia. Developing variations of a single theme of U.S. neo-colonialist aggression!

Another curious omission in the Pentagon Papers is the extent of Pentagon responsibility, at the start at least, of the ill-fated action at Dien Bien Phu. Some space is given to various plans like "Operation Vulture," aimed at saving the French from final defeat, but nothing is said of the initial US encouragement to the French to jump headlong into the trap. For the Vietnamese people, however, Dien Bien Phu was almost as much an American as a French defeat. It was the wrecks of American planes, American tanks, American artillery pieces that later littered the battlefield. The "Navarre Plan," of which Dien Bien Phu was a key element, had been approved in Washington and extra funds earmarked accordingly. On November 23, 1953, General Thomas Trapnell, chief of the US Military Aid and Advisory Group (MAAG) set up in Saigon as far back as October 1950, inspected the Dien Bien Phu positions together with Generals Henri Navarre, C-in-C of the French Expeditionary Corps, and René Cogny, commanding French troops in the Tonkin area, where Dien Bien Phu was situated. Trapnell made two more inspection trips (on December 19, 1953, with a group of US miliary officers, and on January 14, 1954) to check up on the disposition of some $10 million worth of US equipment. On February 2, General "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, C-in-C of US forces in the Pacific, paid a visit and decided to appoint three American officers to remain on the spot and help with the final preparations for the battle. (Dien Bien Phu was intended to be the vital war-winning operation by which the elite troops of the Expeditionary Corps, having been parachuted into Dien Bien Phu valley, deep inside Vietminh-controlled territory, were to outflank and overrun the main Vietminh base area in northern Tonkin.) Had Dien Bien Phu succeeded, much would no doubt have been heard of the key role of the United States in the victory. As it was, it was written off as a French military blunder!

A week before the Geneva Conference—by which time it was clear that Dien Bien Phu was doomed, as Ho Chi Minh at his jungle headquarters assured me it was right at the start of the battle—the Pentagon Papers report the National Security Council as urging President Eisenhower to warn the French that "US aid to France would automatically cease upon Paris' conclusion of an unsatisfactory settlement" and that the United States should approach the puppet governments of the three states of Indochina "with a view to continuing the anti-Vietminh struggle in some other form, including unilateral American involvement 'if necessary.' The NSC clearly viewed the Indochina situation with extreme anxiety, and its action program amounted to unprecedented proposals to threaten France with the serious repercussions of a sell-out in Southeast Asia . . ." (Gravel edition, I:117).

This was the spirit in which the USA approached the Geneva Conference and the implementation of the Cease-fire Agreements. British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden is quoted as revealing that at one point, Walter Bedell Smith, who headed the US delegation, showed him a "telegram from President Eisenhower advising him to do everything in his power to bring the conference to an end as rapidly as possible, on the grounds that the Communists were only spinning things out to suit their own military purposes" (Gravel ed., I:138).

Much of the 58 pages of the chapter on the Geneva Conference deals with the efforts of Dulles to wreck it; to avoid a cease-fire at all costs in favor of international military intervention on the Korean model. With the equivalent of the entire yearly output of officers from the St. Cyr Academy—France's West Point—being lost each year in Indochina, the French began to wonder whether it was worth it. From the government down to the troops dying in ricefield mud, it gradually began to dawn that France itself was fighting and dying for the United States. The United States by the time of Geneva was footing 80 percent of the bill but also, as former premier Paul Reynaud cried out in the French National Assembly: "You Americans draw from Indochina 89 percent of the natural rubber and 52 percent of the tin you need for your consumption. Therefore on the material side of things it is for your interests rather than ours that we are fighting for Indochina."

Even Henri Navarre, the last would-be "war-winner" general, wrote later that "the Americans helped us materially but on the other hand they fought us morally. While they made use of the French 'fist'—essential to their anti-Communist game—they worked to undermine and even destroy our interests." [5] Navarre was lucky that the war ended before he suffered the final humiliation of having the "Frenchification" label stuck to his war efforts. But that he had virtually become an American mercenary, he had started to realize.

Despite the efforts of Dulles, agreement was reached at Geneva. While most of the world heaved a great sigh of relief that one more shooting war had been stopped, Lansdale went full steam ahead with his secret war against the North; Dulles, the CIA and the Pentagon planned the full-scale invasion, and while the US propaganda services shouted at "Communist bad faith," Dulles went ahead to set up the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) to offset the Geneva Agreements and violate them by placing South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia under SEATO "protection."

Meanwhile the United States started to take over from the French in South Vietnam. A serious omission in the chapter on the "Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam" is the failure to mention the US police role and responsibility in putting the finger on those who had been active in the anti-French resistance struggle. This was done within the framework of a "Denounce Communists" campaign almost immediately after the cease-fire, with police teams from Michigan State University helping behind the scenes, with everything from up-to-date fingerprinting and electronic filing methods to torture gadgets used in interrogation. Ngo Dinh Diem, set up in Saigon as premier at US insistence just before the Cease-fire Agreements were concluded, took the view that the resistance struggle had been "illegal"; thus all who helped were "criminals by association." Paragraph 14c of the Geneva Agreements, banning any form of reprisals against those who had helped one side or the other during the war, was ignored in the South from the start.

Although these operations were not directly under the Pentagon, reactions to them certainly contributed to the "origins of the insurgency." A booklet issued by the Information Department of the DRV Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1962 described the situation as early as 1955 as follows: "USOM [US Operations

Mission] spread its network of 'advisers' to all branches of economy and finance. 'Advisers' were to be found in the ministries of Economy, Finance, Agriculture, etc. They were also to be found in many central offices. They participated in the elaboration of general programs and plans to implement them. They controlled the carrying-out of those plans and, in particular the use of the aid funds and the allotment of foreign currency. Through USOM, the United States controlled all economic activities of the Ngo Dinh Diem administration.

"Other branches of Diem's administrative machinery fell under the control of the Mission of the 'Michigan State University' (MSU), a body which reminds one of the US espionage organization labeled 'Free Europe's University.' The MSU Mission had its 'advisers' in the branches of Education, Labor, etc., but its main activities consisted in organizing the security and police services, and training their personnel. General Lansdale, famous for his implication in many coups d'etat and cases of espionage, was for a long time an 'adviser' to this mission, in charge of security and police. . . ." By the end of 1954 the police were busy arresting and physically liquidating anyone in the South named as having taken part in the resistance struggle.

One of the first cases of mass reprisals brought to the notice of the International Control Commission (India as Chairman, Poland and Canada) was at Binh Thanh village on the Mekong River. The ICC had been informed that, early in December 1954, 74 villagers had been arrested on the pretext that they had supported the resistance. Of these 24 were said to have been executed, after which their bodies had been burned and the ashes thrown into the Mekong. The ICC team arrived at Binh Thanh on December 8, and were lodged in a motorboat anchored in the river. The village was occupied by Diemist troops with machine-gun posts at every crossroads. Contact with the population was difficult but by the end of the day, seven witnesses had come forward confirming there had been mass arrests and executions and threats of death against any who testified before the ICC. Next morning the bodies of two of the seven were found, including an old woman who had been beheaded and disemboweled. The other five were under arrest. While the team members were discussing their next move, three sampans appeared out of the mists, the occupants asking if security could be guaranteed for themselves and others who wanted to testify. A French liaison officer gave the necessary assurances. An hour later a flotilla of 95 sampans appeared with almost 500 persons aboard. They had been in hiding since the massacre, which they confirmed [9] with minute details as to the story of the arrests, massacre and disposal of bodies. This was one of scores of such cases of mass reprisals confirmed by the ICC.

I reported at the time[6] that "Up to the end of July 1955 . . . according to incomplete figures forwarded by General Nguyen Vo Giap to the International Control Commission, there had been over 3,000 cases of reprisals against former resistance supporters in South Vietnam, resulting in over 6,000 killed, wounded and missing and more than 25,000 arrested. . . ." Added to these figures were an estimated 7,000 killed and twice as many wounded when Diem's troops attacked the pro-French armed sects, the Binh Xuyen in Saigon and its outskirts and the Hoa Hao in the Mekong delta to the west.

On June 6, 1955, the government of the DRV had declared its readiness "to open the Consultative Conference with the competent representative authorities of the South, from July 20, 1955, onward, to discuss the preparation of free general elections to be held over the entire territory of Vietnam during the month of July 1956. . . ." (As provided for in the Geneva Agreements.)

The Pentagon Papers report that: "By the time the deadlines for election consultations fell due in July 1955, South Vietnam was sovereign *de facto* as well as *de jure,* waxing strong with US aid, and France was no longer in a position to exert strong influence on Diem's political actions. As early as January 1955, President Diem was stating publicly that he was unlikely to proceed with the Geneva elections . . ." (Gravel ed., I:245).

As the French were more and more openly abdicating their responsibilities and had not reacted to the June 6 Declaration, Hanoi addressed a further note to the "Ngo Dinh Diem Administration" on July 19—a very mild note pointing out that as both sides' armed forces had completed regroupment this had created "the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement. . . ." Until this time it should be noted—something ignored by the Pentagon Papers—that the United States, the French and Diem had enjoyed only advantages from the Geneva Agreements. Namely, the French had been able to withdraw their forces intact from untenable positions—after the Dien Bien Phu debacle—north of the 17th parallel; in return the Vietminh forces had abandoned key base areas in the South; some 800,000 Catholics had been moved from the North to the South to bolster Diem's fanatically pro-Catholic regime. Now was to come the *"pro"* part of the *quid pro quo* for the Vietminh—elections to unify the country. "The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam," continued the July 19 note, "suggests that you nominate your representatives to hold, together with its own representatives, the Consultative Conference as from July 20, 1955, onwards, as provided for in the Geneva Agreements, at a place agreeable to both sides on Vietnamese territory, in order to discuss the problem of national reunification through free nationwide elections."

The reply came next morning when military trucks laden with uniformed youths arrived opposite the Majestic and Gallieni hotels, the residential headquarters of the International Control Commission. Armed with axes, pick-handles and machetes, they sacked the offices and private rooms of ICC members as part of the celebration of Diem's officially designated "day of shame" (the first anniversary of the Geneva Agreements).

Dulles is quoted in the Pentagon Papers as having commented on Diem's rejection of the Consultations: "Neither the United States Government nor the Government of Viet-Nam is, of course, a party to the Geneva armistice agreements. We did not sign them, and the Government of Viet-Nam did not sign them and, indeed, protested against them . . ." (Gravel ed., I:245). To which the comment of the editors of the Papers is: "Thus, backed by the US, Diem obdurately refused to open talks with the Hanoi government. He continued to maintain that the Government of South Vietnam had not signed the Geneva Agreements and thus was not bound by them." In this way the Vietminh were cheated of the full fruits of victory in their infinitely difficult and heroic struggle for independence and the foundation was laid for the terrible war that followed. Diem, put into power by the United States and objectively speaking only there because the Vietminh had beaten the French, stepped up his attempts to exterminate the former resistance activists and their supporters: The ferocity of the repression was in direct proportion to the military strength the United States put at his disposal.

Ho Chi Minh had appealed for political struggle to demand the 1956 elections, so the political repression was also directed against any who agitated for the elections or anything else connected with implementation of the Geneva Agreements. To support the latter became a "crime." Committees set up in defense of peace and the Geneva Agreements were dissolved, leading members—including the head of the Saigon-Cholon committee, the lawyer Nguyen Huu Tho—were arrested. (Nguyen Huu Tho was later rescued from prison by NFL guerrillas and became President of the National Liberation Front.) Those who took advantage of the sections of the Geneva Agreements guaranteeing full political freedoms and who tried to use these freedoms in defense of the Agreements were marked down, if not for immediate arrest, for arrest and extermination later.

"The DRV repeatedly tried to engage the Geneva machinery, forwarding messages to the Government of South Vietnam in July 1955, May and June 1956, March 1958, July 1959 and July 1960, proposing consultations to negotiate 'free general elections by secret ballot,' and to liberalize North-South relations in general," comments the Pentagon Papers on this aspect of US-Saigon policy. "Each time the GVN replied with disdain, or with silence. The 17th parallel, with its demilitarized zone on either side, became *de facto* an international boundary, and—since Ngo Dinh Diem's rigid refusal to traffic with the North excluded all economic exchanges and even an interstate postal agreement—one of the most restricted boundaries in the world. The DRV appealed to the UK and the USSR as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference to no avail. In January 1956, on DRV urging, Communist China requested another Geneva Conference to deal with the situation. But the Geneva Co-Chairmen, the USSR and the UK, responded only by extending the functions of the International Control Commission beyond its 1956 expiration date. . . . If the political mechanism for reunifying Vietnam in 1956 proved impractical, the blame lies at least in part with the Geneva conferees themselves, who postulated an ideal political settlement incompatible with the physical and psychological dismemberment of Vietnam they themselves undertook in July 1954" (Gravel ed., I:247). This comment is typical of many such fatuous conclusions by the compilers. They might at least have added: "The major part of the blame however lies with the United States which set out to wreck the Geneva Agreements from the start, especially any provisions which would have extended 'communist control' south of the demarcation line." Diem was a US creation, fed, financed and armed by the United States, with Americans controlling every key aspect of policymaking and implementation.

Repression and massacre became the order of the day. Overcrowded jails could not house the victims. Presidential Order No. 6, of January 11, 1956, provided in Article 1 that "Awaiting the restoration of peace and order, individuals considered dangerous to national defense and common security may, on executive order taken by the President of the Republic as proposed by the Minister of the Interior, be confined to a concentration camp, or forced to reside, or deported far from their dwelling place or far from fixed locations, or subjected to administrative control . . ."[7] with appropriate penalties stipulated for those who evaded the concentration camps and controls.

Conditions in the jails were later described by deputy Tran Ngoc Ban to the South Vietnamese National Assembly on January 3, 1958, as follows:

> Let us take one cell among so many others at the Gia Dinh prison. Forty-five feet long by a little less than eleven feet wide. In this area are generally packed 150 detainees. Simple arithmetic shows us that there is room for three persons per square meter. It is in this place that detainees sleep, eat, wash themselves and ease their bowels. A bucket with a lid is put in a corner of the room for that purpose. It suffices that each of the prisoners uses it once a day for five minutes and the bucket would remain open for twelve hours. . . .
>
> As for possibilities of sitting or lying down . . . squatting they have just enough room; sitting cross-legged they are very cramped. At night they can

> just sleep lying with their knees under their chin. So a quarter of the detainees have to stand up to allow the others to stretch out for a moment. It is a fraternal gesture but also a necessity. Because of the sweltering heat . . . many detainees are unable to bear wearing a garment and remain half-naked. They must live day and night in this room and only go out into the courtyard once a day for a meal, which is taken outside even in rainy weather. Medicines hardly exist. . . ." [8]

For having the courage to reveal this, Tran Ngoc Ban, M.P., was arrested and sent to join the inmates whose fate he had described. He was talking of those fortunate enough to have escaped the extermination squads that were hard at work physically liquidating what were in fact political opponents of the Diem regime.

During the first year of its activities, the International Control Commission investigated 40 violations of Article 14C in the South, some of them involving the massacre of hundreds of people. The balance of that first year of "peace" in the South was 16 violations confirmed, 13 investigations completed but findings not published, 8 cases under investigation and 3 cases in which evidence was insufficient to prove violations. There were no violations of 14C in the North. Not included in the list was a case on July 7, 1955, in which a battalion of Diem's security forces surrounded the tiny hamlets of Tan Lap and Tan Hiep in Quang Ngai province—a guerrilla area in the resistance struggle. Every man, woman and child at Tan Lap was killed and all the males at Tan Hiep on the evening of July 7. Five days later the security troops returned to Tan Hiep, arrested 15 women, raped them, then took them to a neighboring hamlet of An Che and killed them. The following day they killed the remaining three adults and 15 children at Tan Hiep. Not a living soul was left in these two hamlets—30 men, 30 women and 32 children had been massacred. Detailed reports were made to the ICC, but investigation of the case was blocked by the Diemist authorities.

By early 1956, Diem had almost completely paralyzed the work of the ICC, as the following report shows: "Mobile Team 117 conducted an investigation asked for by the People's Army of Vietnam, Note No. 141–CT/I/B, dated March 2, 1956, on the massacre by the South Vietnamese authorities of 21 persons buried alive at the marketplace at Cho Duoc and reprisals against 14 other persons of the villages of An Tra and Tan Luu (Quang Nam province) but the interested party refused to allow the Commission to have a mobile Team investigate this case." [9]

"Security was the focus of US aid," reports the Pentagon Papers dealing with this early period. "More than 75 percent of the economic aid the US provided in the same period went into the GVN military budget; thus at least $8 out of every $10 of aid provided Vietnam went directly toward security. In addition, other amounts of nominally economic aid (e.g., that for public administration) went toward security forces, and aid for agriculture and transportation principally funded projects with strategic purposes and with an explicit military rationale. For example, a 20-mile stretch of highway from Saigon to Bien Hoa, built at Gen. Williams' instance for specifically military purposes, received more US economic aid than all funds provided for labor, community development, social welfare, health, and education in the years 1954–1961" (Gravel ed., I:268). Would US taxpayers be proud of this use of their taxes?

If one compares the reality of the unilateral war against the people of South Vietnam waged against an unarmed population for its political opposition to a fascist regime with the description given by that semiofficial apologist for US Vietnam policies, Douglas Pike, then one has some measure of the deceit of public opinion. Pike is trying to make the point that the NLF was entirely a creation of Hanoi. "Of necessity it must have been created in Hanoi and imported," the Pentagon Papers credit Pike with writing. "A revolutionary organization must build; it begins with persons suffering genuine grievances, who are slowly organized and whose militancy gradually increases until a critical mass is reached and the revolution explodes. Exactly the reverse was the case with the NLF. It sprang full-blown into existence and then was fleshed out. The grievances were developed or manufactured almost as a necessary afterthought" (Gravel ed., I:346).

Reality was that from 1959 onwards, especially after the passing of Law 10/59, providing for death or life imprisonment for a wide range of offenses against the government, there were spontaneous, sporadic and unorganized acts of resistance by those who "preferred to die on our feet rather than on our knees" as one of them expressed it to me. Later these acts became more generalized and to coordinate and give correct leadership the NLF was formed in December 1960. By the time the NLF's first congress was held (February 16 to March 3, 1962), and according to incomplete figures compiled by NLF committees at provincial and district levels: 105,000 former resistance supporters had been killed, 350,000 at that moment were being held in 874 prisons and concentration camps, including over 6,000 children, many of them born in prison. These are what Pike describes as "grievances manufactured as an afterthought."

If I have dealt at length and in detail with some aspects of the early years after the Geneva Agreements, this is because there are vast gaps in the Pentagon Papers' account of the period which have to be sketched in to understand the monstrous injustice done the Vietnamese people, even before the US invasion with combat troops in 1965 and the start of the bombings of the North. They were cheated of the fruits of their struggle against the French, essentially because of US intervention. It is against this background and the merciless, barbarous years "of the long knives," that the people of the South took to arms to defend man's most ancient rights to defend his life and home. Some knowledge of what went on in this period is helpful, incidentally, in understanding why the DRV–PRG negotiators in Paris are tough, and determined that this time they really get what they fought for—total independence on terms which can never again be violated.

The North Vietnamese date the next phase of US intervention—preparing for and waging "special war"—from the arrival of the Staley Mission in mid-June 1961. President of the Stanford Research Institute, economist by profession, Eugene Staley was soon dabbling in affairs which had little to do with his academic qualifications. His approach may be judged from the following passage quoted in the Pentagon Papers: "Vietnam is today under attack in a bitter, total struggle which involves its survival as a free nation. Its enemy, the Viet Cong, is ruthless, resourceful and elusive. This enemy is supplied, reinforced, and centrally directed by the international communist apparatus operating through Hanoi. To defeat it requires the mobilization of the entire economic, military, psychological, and social resources of the country and vigorous support from the United States . . ." (Gravel ed., II:63). (It is worth noting that four months later the NIE—National Intelligence Estimate—gave the total number of guerrillas as 17,000, of whom "80–90 percent had been locally recruited and . . . little evidence that the VC relied on external supplies. . . ." The Diem army at the time was 170,000 with another 80,000 paramilitary units. For the military muscle of the "international communist apparatus" 17,000 guerrillas, many of them armed only with clubs, hoes and bicycle chains, etc., at the time, seems modest to say the least. John Kenneth Galbraith, visiting the South a month after the NIE report, believed the number of guerrillas was closer to 10,000.) Staley recommended building the regular Diem army up to 200,000, to be increased later to 270,000. The Pentagon Papers dismiss the Staley report as "not much more than a piece of paper" and say the President agreed with its three basic tenets: (a) Security requirements must, for the present, be given first priority; (b) military operations will not achieve lasting results unless economic and social programs are continued and accelerated; (c) it is our joint interest to accelerate measures to achieve a self-sustaining economy and a free and peaceful society in Viet-Nam."

Hanoi's information about the Staley Mission was much more complete and reflects another of those important omissions of the Pentagon Papers. On February 28, 1962, the Foreign Ministry of the DRV published the following details:

> Three phases are contemplated in the Staley Plan:
>
> *First Phase:* "Pacification" of South Vietnam within 18 months and "establishment of bases" in North Vietnam.
>
> *Second Phase:* Economic rehabilitation and reinforcement of the South Vietnam economy, increase of sabotage in North Vietnam.
>
> *Third Phase:* Development of the South Vietnam economy, and offensive against North Vietnam.
>
> For the first phase, considered an extremely important one, Staley has laid down a series of measures, including:
>
> Increase of the strength of the South Vietnam regular army from 150,000 to 170,000 men by the end of 1961.
>
> Increase of the strength of the civil guard from 68,000 to 100,000 men and turning it into regular forces.
>
> Increase of the strength of the police from 45,000 to 90,000 men.
>
> Reinforcing the "self-defense" corps in the villages to the extent required.
>
> Regroupment of villages and concentration of the people into "prosperity zones" and "strategic hamlets" which are actually camouflaged concentration camps; establishment of a no-man's land starting from the provisional military demarcation line and running along the frontier between South Vietnam on the one hand, and Laos and Cambodia on the other, setting up of 100 new "prosperity zones" in the delta of the Mekong, which are to be imbricated with a network of "strategic hamlets" fenced in by bamboo hedges, barbed wire and control posts, for the purpose of concentrating nearly 1,000,000 peasants.
>
> Increase of the aid to the Ngo Dinh Diem Administration to carry out the above-mentioned plan.[10]

Far from being "not much more than a piece of paper" this was the blueprint for a vast military campaign, very soon to be run by the United States itself, to try and herd the whole of South Vietnam's peasantry into 16,000 concentration camps disguised as "strategic hamlets." I published details of the Staley Plan—and the stepped-up dollar allocations to finance it—at the time in newspaper articles, also in a book, with the comment that "no peasants in the world had so many dollars per capita lavished on their extermination." Also that "General Maxwell Taylor was sent from October 10 to 25 (1961) to work out supplementary details of the Staley Plan in view of a decision taken a few days earlier by the National Security Council on direct US intervention. . . ." [11] Staley's monstrous "strategic hamlet" program which brought the whole of the peasantry out in armed revolt, is dismissed as "economic and social programs" in the Pentagon Papers and the consequences as "grievances . . . manufactured almost as a necessary afterthought" by Pike.

One of Maxwell Taylor's contributions which, if Hanoi knew about at the time, did not reveal, was to start direct US military intervention camouflaged as a "humanitarian" Task Force of 6,000 to 8,000 men for "flood relief." In an "eyes only for the President" cable from the Philippines (presumably on October 25) Taylor reports that "the interim Communist goal—en route to total takeover—appears to be a neutral Southeast Asia, detached from US protection. This strategy is well on the way to success in Vietnam. . . ." To counter this "dangerous and immoral" possibility (to quote from John Foster Dulles' characterization of neutrality), Taylor recommended as his first point that "upon request from the Government of Vietnam to come to its aid in resisting the increasing aggressions of the Viet-Cong and in repairing the ravages of the Delta flood which, in combination, threaten the lives of its citizens and the security of the country, the US Government offer to join the GV in a massive joint effort as part of a total mobilization of GVN resources to cope with both the Viet-Cong (VC) and the ravages of the flood. . . . In support of the foregoing broad commitment . . . the US Government will engage in a joint survey of the conditions in the provinces to assess the social, political, intelligence and military factors bearing on the prosecution of the counterinsurgency . . ." etc., etc. Taylor outlines a most comprehensive plan for stepped-up intelligence and actual military operations over the whole of South Vietnam, always under the guise of "flood relief." In a second "eyes only for the President" cable apparently sent the same day, Taylor emphasizes the necessity for speed—otherwise "the possibility of emphasizing the humanitarian mission will wane. . . ." With the Taylor mission was William Jorden of the State Department,[12] who summed up his impression of the underlying reasons for the situation: "Intrigue, nepotism and even corruption might be accepted, for a time, if combined with efficiency and visible progress. When they accompany administrative paralysis and steady deterioration, they become intolerable. . . ." (Gravel ed., II:95.)

President Kennedy did not accept the "Flood Task Force" idea but did opt to send in US military personnel by the end of 1961. Decisive probably in the decision, if not the manner of intervention, was a memo by Defense Secretary McNamara of November 8, supporting Taylor's recommendations. There is a fascinating estimation of McNamara's that "Hanoi and Peiping may intervene openly . . ." but even so "the maximum US forces required on the ground in Southeast Asia will not exceed six divisions or about 205,000 men . . ." (Gravel ed., II:108). (In his jungle headquarters some years later, discussing the possibility of the commitment of US ground forces, the NLF president Nguyen Huu Tho told me that he estimated that if the United States decided to intervene, they would probably put in around 500,000 troops. This was at the Lunar New Year 1964, but the NLF president did not have the benefit of McNamara's computers!) However it proves that the Pentagon and White House were well aware in early November 1961 that they had embarked on the step-by-step course of full-scale warfare in South Vietnam.

In order to justify the despatch of the first troops, Jorden was given the task of rushing out a "white paper" to prove that the whole problem in the South was "aggression and subversion" from the North. There is a Rusk-McNamara recommendation to the President, dated November 11, point five of which proposes that as the US military personnel to be sent would be a violation of the Geneva Agreements, the government "publish the 'Jorden report' as a US 'white paper,' transmitting it as simultaneously as possible to the governments of all countries with which we have diplomatic relations, including the Communist states . . ." (Gravel ed., II:115). This was done. When it came out—as a "Blue Book"—Robert Kennedy, then Attorney General, is reported to have called Jorden in and said, "Bill—there is not a single fact in that report that would stand up in a court of law."

Confirmation that Hanoi's information on the Staley Plan was correct was soon to come in operational terms and as regards the Third Phase of an offensive against the North, there is a passage in Maxwell Taylor's full report of November 3, in which—waxing more and more enthusiastic as he moves from "flood control" to broader prospects—he writes: "It is clear to me that the time may come in our relations to Southeast Asia when we must declare our intention to attack the source of guerrilla aggression in North Vietnam and impose on the Hanoi Government a price for participating in the current war which is commensurate with the damage being inflicted on its neighbors to the South . . ." (Gravel ed., II:98).

It is generally considered that US intervention started on December 11, 1961, when two helicopter companies of 36 Shawnee helicopters and 370 officers and men of the US army together with 7 T-28 trainer-combat planes were landed in Saigon. But Hanoi reported that a squadron of "B-26" bombers "and several hundred US officers, NCOs and troops arrived at the Bien Hoa air base on November 10, 1961.

While the State Department was trying to peddle the myth of North Vietnam's "aggression and subversion" against the South to cover up the start of its own war of aggression against the whole Vietnamese people, there was very real "aggression and subversion" being carried out by CIA-directed operations against the North. "On July 24, 1961, General Arthur D. Trudeau, Chief of Research and Development of the US armed forces, a specialist in 'activities of subversion and sabotage' in the socialist countries, author of a plan for sabotage and subversion in Eastern Europe and North Vietnam,' came in person to South Vietnam," [13] reports a document published by the Press and Information Department of the DRV's foreign ministry, in 1964. "Since then," continues this document, "under the guidance of the CIA, the armed forces of the United States and its agents, starting from South Vietnam and sometimes from US bases in the Pacific, have made frequent intrusions into the air space and territorial waters of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.[14] Spy commandos, directly organized, trained and equipped by US specialists, have been repeatedly smuggled in groups into North Vietnam by land, by sea and by air for the purposes of espionage, provocation and sabotage.

"They are usually South Vietnam Army non-commissioned officers and men born in North Vietnam, or youths who had been forcibly evacuated from North to South Vietnam by the French Union Forces. They are well acquainted with various regions in North Vietnam, where some of them also have relatives. They had been enlisted by the US intelligence agencies and their men into 'Special Force' units under Colonel Lam Son, who had replaced Colonel Le Quang Tung.[15] They underwent training in the centers of Nha Trang, Tourane (Danang) or Saigon, and in some cases in Taiwan, Guam or Okinawa. They were initiated into the secret of the job by US military and intelligence experts.

"They were subsequently sent to North Vietnam with instructions to engage, depending on the cases, in various activities: collection of intelligence data—military, political, economic and otherwise, psychological warfare: distribution of leaflets, dissemination of false and tendentious news, kidnapping or assassination of officials, army men and civilians with a view to extorting intelligence data or creating an atmosphere of insecurity, sabotage of defense installations, warehouses, factories and workshops, mines, bridges, roads, railways and setting up of local spy-rings or hotbeds of armed activities particularly in remote hilly areas, with the specific aim of eventually starting 'guerrilla' operations in North Vietnam.

"To achieve the above objectives, the United States and the South Vietnam Administration have undertaken large-scale smuggling of spy-commandos into North Vietnam, heedless of their agents' fate, the successful outcome of only one operation out of a hundred being already, in their eyes, a success.

"But, in the face of the vigilance and the patriotism being displayed by the people of North Vietnam, they will reap only bitter setbacks. The US news agency UPI itself was compelled to admit openly on February 22, 1964, that 'about 85 to 90 percent (of course these figures are below the actual ones—Ed.) of the South Vietnamese guerrilla specialists airdropped or otherwise smuggled into North Vietnam were either killed or captured.' . . .[16]

"In spite of many serious defeats in South Vietnam and the shameful failure of their provocation and sabotage *vis-à-vis* the DRV, the United States and the South Vietnam administration are still contemplating 'major sabotage raids which would have a quick and serious effect' . . ."

The booklet then lists 62 cases of air violations, usually associated with the dropping of commandos or attempts to establish air-ground liaison with those already dropped and 22 naval operations for the same purpose.

Such groups were almost always rounded up within hours of being dropped or landed. The Foreign Ministry documents cite many specific cases. For example:

> At about 1 A.M. on April 13, 1963, an aircraft coming from South Vietnam intruded into the airspace of North Vietnam and dropped a group of spy-commandos on a hilly area northwest of Kiên Thanh commune at the limits of Ha Bac and Lang Son provinces. Immediately after the landing and before they had time to come into contact with one another and to hide their equipment underground, the spy-commandos were rounded up by the local security forces, militia and people. In their stampede, they left behind three cases of weapons, signal equipment, instruments for sabotage, food rations and medicines, six spare parachutes, six plastic hats and parachutists' cotton-padded attire. Continuing their pursuit, the local people and armed forces successively arrested five spy-commandos and shot dead a sixth one who had tried to oppose resistance, and who . . . was subsequently identified as Luong Van Pho, sabotage agent. . . .
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> *17–20 Apr* Secretary of State Rusk and party visit Saigon. . . . At the April 19 meeting with the Country Team, much of the discussion is devoted to the problem of pressures against the North.[19]
>
> *15 Jun* W. P. Bundy memo to SecState and SecDef. . . . One of the important themes is that an act of irreversible US commitment might provide the necessary psychological support to get real reform and effectiveness from the GVN. (Again the theme that the North is considered hostage for reprisals in order to get a more stable government in the South. W.B.)
>
> *19 Jul* In a public speech, Khanh [General Nguyen Khanh, the US "strong man" at the top in Saigon at that time. W.B.] refers to the "March to the North." In a separate statement to the press, General [Nguyen Cao] Ky also refers to the "march North" [In more detailed references to these and subsequent such statements it transpires that the "March to the North" means US "reprisal bombings." W.B.].
>
> *2 Aug* The destroyer *USS Maddox* is attacked in the Tonkin Gulf by DRV patrol craft while on a DE SOTO patrol off the DRV coast. Several patrol boats sunk.[20]
>
> *4 Aug* In a repetition of the 2 August incident, the *Maddox* and the *C. Turner Joy* are attacked. After strenuous efforts to confirm the attacks, the President authorizes reprisal air strikes against the North.
>
> *5 Aug* US aircraft attack several DRV patrol boat bases, destroying ships and facilities.
>
> *7 Aug* At the time of the attacks, the President briefed leaders of Congress and had a resolution of support for US policy introduced. It is passed with near-unanimity by both Houses.
>
> *11 Aug* The President signs the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and pledges full support for the GVN.
>
> *18 Sep* The first resumed DE SOTO patrol comes under apparent attack. To avoid future incidents, the President suspends the patrols. [With the blank check already in his pocket, Johnson no longer needed the provocations of the DE SOTO patrols. W.B.]

The DRV claims that a series of provocations started on July 30 at 11:40 P.M. when US and South Vietnamese warships shelled the North Vietnamese islands of Hon Ngu and Hon Me, four and twelve kilometers respectively off the coast of Thanh Hoa province. From July 31 to August 2, the destroyer *Maddox* "operated very near the Vietnamese coast in Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, Nghe An and Thanh Hoa provinces." [21]

"On August 1, at 11:45 A.M., four T-28s coming from the direction of Laos bombed and strafed the Nam Can frontier post—7 kilometers from the Vietnam-Laos border—which was visibly flying the flag of the DRV and also Noong De village, about 20 kms from the same border. Both places are situated far inside Vietnamese territory and belong to Ky Son district, Nghe An province. . . ." The raid against Nam Can was repeated the following day with 7 T-28s and AD-6s, also coming from the direction of Laos, according to the foreign ministry report, which continues:

"On August 2, at 3 P.M. [local time], while in Vietnamese waters between Hon Me and Lach Truong [Thanh Hoa] the *Maddox,* encountering patrol boats of the DRV, opened fire at them. Confronted with such brazen provocation, the Vietnamese boats had to take defensive action to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial waters, protect the fishermen, and finally drove the intruder out of Vietnamese waters.

"On August 3, at 11 P.M. [local time], under the cover of the *Ticonderoga* task group stationed in the offing, four warships—two small and two big—intruded into Vietnamese waters, and opened fire with 40 mm guns and 12.7 mm machine guns at Ron and Deo Ngang areas [Quang Binh province on the North Vietnamese mainland. W.B.].

"On August 5, 1964, from 12:30 to 5 P.M. (local time), Skyhawk, Crusader and Phantom jets and Skyraider aircraft taking off from the carriers *Constellation* and *Ticonderoga* anchored in the Gulf of Bac Bo (Tonkin Gulf) came in many waves to bomb and rocket a number of places along the North Vietnamese coast, the vicinity of Hong Gai town, Lach Truong, the vicinity of Ben Thuy—Vinh, the mouth of the Gianh River. . . ." The events between July 30 and August 2 were also described in a statement issued by a spokesman for the High Command of the Vietnam People's Army, on August 4.

The DRV Memorandum denied as a "farce" the charge that it attacked US destroyers on the night of August 4, describing the charge as "an out-and-out fabrication," and makes the following points:

> President Johnson said that following the August 2, 1964, "attack" in the Gulf of Bac Bo, he ordered the destroyer *Turner Joy*—then in the Philippines—to join the *Maddox*. In fact at 7:30 P.M. on August 2, the *Turner Joy* was already in the Gulf of Bac Bo, east of Deo Ngang. In other words, it must have received the relevant instructions prior to "the first attack" on the *Maddox*.
>
> President Johnson also said that following the "second attack," in the night of August 4, 1964, he ordered the aircraft carrier *Constellation* to sail to the Gulf of Bac Bo as reinforcement to the US Navy there. Actually the *Constellation* left Hong Kong in the morning of August 4, 1964. This was confirmed by its commander, Captain Frederic A. Bardshar, at his August 10, 1964 press conference.[22] In the evening of August 4, 1964, i.e., prior to the "second attack," the carrier was already in the Gulf of Bac Bo.
>
> Judging by President Johnson's assertions, it would appear that the destroyer *Maddox* was the only US warship in the Gulf of Bac Bo in the evening of August 2. As a matter of fact, four destroyers were operating at that time along the North Vietnamese coast, namely the *Maddox*, the *Turner Joy*, the *Samuel Moore* and the *Berkeley*.
>
> In the evening of August 4 and prior to the "second attack," 11 US warships belonging to the 7th Fleet were already on the spot. *Ticonderoga* task group with the aircraft-carrier *Ticonderoga*, destroyers *Samuel Moore, Edison, Harry Hubbard* and *Berkeley*; *Constellation* task group with the aircraft-carrier *Constellation*, destroyers *Preston* and *Fechteler*, and the *USS Gridley;* and finally the two destroyers *Maddox* and *Turner Joy*.
>
> According to President Johnson's August 4, 1964, statement, the air strike against North Vietnam was decided following the "second attack" on US warships in the Gulf of Bac Bo.
>
> "But, according to the Reuter correspondent who attended the August 10, 1964, press conference aboard a ship of the 7th Fleet, the pilot of an A-4

> jet based on the carrier *Constellation*—whose name was not given—said that the pilots were informed of the attack against North Vietnam back in the morning of August 4, that is in the evening of August 3 (Washington time). . . .
>
> The August 5, 1964, air raid was not an isolated action: on the contrary, it came in the wake of a series of other US war acts against the DRV. . . ."
>
> The Memorandum then quotes a DRV government declaration of August 6, 1964, that: "The air strafing and bombing of August 5, 1964, are obviously a premeditated act of war within the US Government's plan for intensified provocation and sabotage against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam . . . an extremely serious act of war . . . which constitutes a blatant violation of international law and the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indo-China, and adds to the danger of extended war in Indo-China and South-East Asia."

All that has happened since, including the revelations of the Pentagon Papers—inadequate as they are in many instances—confirm how completely accurate was this immediate evaluation of the "Tonkin incident" by the government of the DRV.

From the August 5 air attacks to operations "Flaming Dart"—a so-called "reprisal raid" on Febuary 8, 1965, for a guerrilla attack on a US helicopter base as Pleiku, and "Rolling Thunder"—the code name for the systematic bombing of North Vietnam, starting March 2, 1965, was but a short step once Congress had given Johnson power to do what he liked in Southeast Asia. That by this time he was looking for pretexts to put into effect decisions taken months earlier, is documented in a Chronology (Gravel ed., III:275ff.) which reveals that it was decided on January 28, to resume the provocative DE SOTO patrols "on or about 3 February" and that on January 29, the "Joint Chiefs of Staff urged again that a strong reprisal action be taken immediately after the next DRV/VC provocation. In particular, they propose targets and readiness to strike should the forthcoming resumption of the DE SOTO patrols be challenged."

The DE SOTO patrols were, in fact, called off temporarily because Soviet premier Kosygin was due to arrive within a few days in Hanoi. A routine guerrilla attack on a US base, however, was used as the pretext to set "Flaming Dart" into operation, and five days later Johnson approved "Rolling Thunder." Within six days of the start of "Rolling Thunder" the first marines started disembarking at Danang and the United States was fully committed to a war of destruction against the DRV and a war of aggression against the Vietnamese people as a whole.

Notes

1. Although my task was to compare certain elements of the Pentagon Papers with Vietnamese "communist historical sources dealing with the same period," I have drawn on my own on-the-spot experiences for certain aspects which were not covered at the time, for reasons of security, by North Vietnamese official documents. This applies especially for such matters as the Lansdale sabotage efforts in the period immediately after the Geneva Agreements. W.B.

2. The above and following passages represent the first reaction from Hanoi to the publication of the Pentagon Papers. They are from the Introduction to "*Les Vrais et les*

Faux Secrets du Pentagone" (True and False Pentagon Secrets) published in booklet form by *Le Courrier d Vietnam*, Hanoi, 1971.

3. *Crisis Now* by James M. Gavin, in collaboration with Arthur T. Hadley Vintage Books, May 1968, pp. 46–49.

4. "Binh" and "Hao" are the code names given by Lansdale in his report for the espionage-sabotage groups sent into the North.

5. *L'Agonie de l'Indochine* by General Henri Navarre, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1956.

6. "North of the 17th Parallel," Hanoi, Septtmber 1955.

7. "Official Gazette" of the Republic of Vietnam, No. 5, January 28, 1956.

8. Quoted by the author in *This Furtive War*, p. 48. International Publishers, New York, 1963.

9. ICC Note No. IC/FB/3/2/18, Jan. 7, 1958.

10. Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, February 1962.

11. *The Furtive War*, p. 67, International Publishers, New York, 1963.

12. William Jorden, formerly of AP and the New York Times, turned up as Harriman's spokesman at the Paris Peace talks in May, 1968.

13. The *Wall Street Journal*, on May 24, 1961, reported that General Trudeau had worked out a plan for "sabotage and subversion of Eastern Europe and North Vietnam," which is the source quoted by the DRV document.

14. A list of such incidents during 1961–1962, was published by the DRV in July 1963, but is not in the hands of the author at the time of writing.

15. Former head of South Vietnam's "Special Forces." He was executed at the time of the coup against Diem.

16. Quoted from the same UPI despatch of February 22, 1964.

17. ISA: Office of International Security Affairs, Defense Department.

18. William P. Bundy, then Under Secretary of State for Asian Affairs.

19. The timetable references are taken verbatim from Gravel ed., III:8–13. The "Country Team" is apparently the top US military, diplomatic, CIA, etc., personnel in Saigon.

20. DE SOTO was a code name for destroyer patrols off the coast of North Vietnam, which usually took place within the latter's territorial waters, claimed as 12 nautical miles.

21. This and other quotes are from a "Memorandum regarding the US war acts against the DRV in the first days of August 1964," published by the DRV's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 1964.

22. The Memorandum cites Reuter for this information.

6. Ideology and Society: The Pentagon Papers and North Vietnam

by Gerard Chaliand

Concerning the air war over North Vietnam, the Pentagon Papers acknowledge that:

> In the North, the regime battened down and prepared to ride out the storm. With Soviet and Chinese help, it greatly strengthened its air defenses, multiplying the number of AAA guns and radars, expanding the number of jet fighter airfields and the jet fighter force, and introducing an extensive SAM system. Economic development plans were laid aside. Imports were increased to offset production losses. Bomber facilities were in most cases simply abandoned. The large and vulnerable barracks and storage depots were replaced by dispersed and concealed ones. Several hundred thousand workers were mobilized to keep the transportation system operating. Miles of by-pass roads were built around choke-points to make the system redundant. Knocked-out bridges were replaced by fords, ferries, or alternate structures, and methods were adopted to protect them from attack. Traffic shifted to night time, poor weather, and camouflage. Shuttling and transshipment practices were instituted. Construction material, equipment, and workers were prepositioned along key routes in order to effect quick repairs. Imports of railroad cars and trucks were increased to offset equipment losses.
>
> In short, NVN leaders mounted a major effort to withstand the bombing pressure. They had to change their plans and go on a war footing. They had to take drastic measures to shelter the population and cope with the bomb damage. They had to force the people to work harder and find new ways to keep the economy operating. They had to greatly increase imports and their dependence on the USSR and China. There were undoubtedly many difficulties and hardships involved. Yet, NVN had survived. Its economy had continued to function. The regime had not collapsed, and it had not given in. And it still sent men and supplies to SVN (Gravel edition, IV:58).

How and why has North Vietnam been able to resist the American bombardment? Before replying to this question, I would like to summarize the diverse, and over the years often-changing, motives which led to the decision to undertake an air war against North Vietnam. After having pretended that the escalation was simply a reaction to the Maddox incident in the Gulf of Tonkin, then

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later pretending that it was a reprisal to the attack against the American base at Pleiku, the Johnson administration finally affirmed that the escalation was aimed at stopping the flow of DRV material and troops to the South. In the context of the domino theory, to bomb the North was an effort to show not only the South Vietnamese favorable to the Saigon government, but also China and the other Southeast Asian states the determination of the United States to bar the road to communism.

Many other reasons have been found to minimize circumstantially the failure of the escalation, but even when this failure is recognized, what is lacking—and this is what strikes me about the Pentagon Papers—is a *concrete analysis* of the causes of the failure. One has the impression from beginning to end that their analysis remains on the edge of the subject.

An analysis of the causes of the failure of the bombardment of North Vietnam can only rest on the understanding of these two fundamentals:

1) The historical and social conditions which shaped the Vietnamese people.
2) The ideology which motivates and supports the will and the actions of the leaders of North Vietnam, and through the mediation of the party, the masses of North Vietnam.

In reading the Pentagon Papers, as well as the writings of other government officials, one ascertained an ignorance of one or the other, if not both, of these two fundamentals.[1] One must remember that before dropping the bombs the American air force (during the Kennedy administration in 1961) dropped tracts to maintain the morale of the North Vietnamese peasants, reassuring them that the United States had not forgotten them and that they would be liberated from their Communist leaders.

I. THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS WHICH SHAPED THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

From the beginning of Vietnamese history, several centuries before our era, the fundamental social structure of Vietnam has been the village commune. It has endured down to our times without having been assimilated by the long Chinese occupation which gave many of its institutions to Vietnam. The state exacted tribute and drafted the youth for the army, but the village community, through the mediation of its council of notables, fixed the amount of the tax for each family and designated the recruits.

The mandarin, representative of the state, did not penetrate the village protected by its high bamboo hedge, described here by Gourou:

> At the same time as it provides protection against dangers, the hedge is a kind of sacred boundary to the village community, the sign of its individuality and independence. If in a period of uprisings, the village has participated in the agitation or given shelter to the rebels, the first punishment inflicted on it is to force the village to cut down its bamboo hedge. This is a grave wound for its self-respect, a sign of scandal. The village feels as embarrassed as a human would who has been stripped and abandoned in the middle of a fully dressed crowd.[2]

The *cohesion* of this rural society stemming from the Vietnamese commune resisted ten centuries of Chinese occupation even as it absorbed Chinese culture.

The central authorities were never in direct contact with local individuals, but only with the commune, which thus exercised its *autonomy*. In its attitude toward the ruling state, as in its attitude toward the natural milieu it sought to control, the inhabitants of the commune maintained *solidarity*. The success or the opprobrium of one member of the commune reflected on the totality of the village.

The specific factors which constitute the national character of the Vietnamese are determined by the village community, its relative autonomy and its particular solidarity. The unceasing hydraulic work, necessarily collective and of vital importance for the rice fields of the Red River delta, cradle of the Vietnamese nation, reinforced this cohesion and this solidarity, and developed the tenacity and the capacity for painstaking labor which characterize the Vietnamese peasant.

Finally, besides the village and the hydraulic questions, a third factor permits a better understanding of the Vietnamese personality: *its military tradition,* both of conquest and resistance. From the eleventh to the eighteenth century, stimulated by the shortage of farmland, a slow but uninterrupted movement advanced little by little the network of Vietnamese villages all the way down to the Ca Mau peninsula, destroying on its way the Cham and Khmer empires. In the interim, the Vietnamese people forged for itself a long tradition of resistance against various Chinese dynasties, including the Mongols. This military tradition necessarily rested on a highly developed *national consciousness.*

These historical and social factors have only been succinctly recalled; a deeper understanding of them[3] permits one to measure to what point the decentralization, the dispersion, the provincial and village autonomy that the bombings have created, coincides with the historical structure of the rural base of Vietnamese society. In a situation where many countries would have been disabled, Vietnam organized itself effectively.

None of these factors by themselves are sufficient to explain why one doesn't find the same behavior in Hanoi that one finds in Saigon. In the contemporary world none of these factors would be sufficient to permit a small, still essentially agricultural nation to successfully resist the pressure of a powerful industrial country. For example, in the Pentagon Papers one reads:

> The threat implicit in minimum but increasing amounts of force ("slow squeeze") would, it was hoped by some, ultimately bring Hanoi to the table on terms favorable to the U.S. Underlying this optimistic view was a significant underestimate of the level of the DRV commitment to victory in the South, and an overestimate of the effectiveness of U.S. pressures in weakening that resolve (Gravel ed., III: 112).

One doesn't see where the mistakes in estimations have been made. The rare explanations are incapable of embracing the logic of the adversary. They denote "occidentocentrism," narrow-mindedness, an incapacity to come to grips with the factors and profound motivations of the adversary. Consider the following passage:

> The idea that destroying, or threatening to destroy, NVN's industry would pressure Hanoi into calling its quits seems, in retrospect, a colossal misjudgment. The idea was based, however, on a plausible assumption about the *rationality* of NVN's leaders, which the U.S. intelligence community as a whole seemed to share. This was that the value of what little industrial plant NVN possessed was disproportionately great. That plant was purchased by

> an extremely poor nation at the price of considerable sacrifice over many years. Even though it did not amount to much, it no doubt symbolized the regime's hopes and desires for national status, power, and wealth, and was probably a source of considerable pride. It did not seem unreasonable to believe that NVN leaders would not wish to risk the destruction of such assets, especially when that risk seemed (to us) easily avoidable by cutting down the insurgency and deferring the takeover of SVN until another day and perhaps in another manner—which Ho Chi Minh had apparently decided to do once before, in 1954.[4] After all, an ample supply of oriental patience is precisely what an old oriental revolutionary like Ho Chi Minh was supposed to have[5] (Gravel ed., IV:57; italics are author's).

Compared to the above, even the Jason Report, which was highly critical and recognized the failure of the bombardments, was able to single out only one aspect, certainly important, but by itself insufficient to explain the resistance of North Vietnam: nationalism. Compare this passage:

> *The bombing campaign against NVN has not discernibly weakened the determination of the North Vietnamese leaders to continue to direct and support the insurgency in the South.* Shortages of food and clothing, travel restrictions, separations of families, lack of adequate medical and educational facilities, and heavy work loads have tended to affect adversely civilian morale. However, there are few if any reliable reports on a breakdown of the commitment of the people to support the war. Unlike the situation in the South, there are no reports of marked increases of absenteeism, draft dodging, black market operations or prostitution. There is no evidence that possible war weariness among the people has shaken the leadership's belief that they can continue to endure the bombing and outlast the U.S. and SVN in a protracted war of attrition. . . .
>
> The expectation that bombing would erode the determination of Hanoi and its people clearly overestimated the persuasion and disruptive effects of the bombing and, correspondingly, underestimated the tenacity and recuperative capabilities of the North Vietnamese. That the bombing has not achieved anticipated goals reflects a general failure to appreciate the fact, well-documented in the historical and social scientific literature, that a direct, frontal attack on a society tends to strengthen the social fabric of the nation, to increase popular support of the existing government, to improve the determination of both the leadership and the populace to fight back, to induce a variety of protective measures that reduces the society's vulnerability to future attack and to develop an increased capacity for quick repairs and restoration of essential functions. The great variety of physical and social countermeasures that North Vietnam has taken in response to the bombing is now well documented, but the potential effectiveness of these countermeasures has not been adequately considered in previous planning or assessment studies (Gravel ed., IV:224).

II. THE IDEOLOGY

It is not simple to explain the role of ideology, especially if one begins with the prejudice that your yourself, and consequently the society to which you belong, think rationally, whereas the adversary alone is "ideologized." This procedure is more common in the United States than in other Western countries, especially since the Cold War began. American society, despite the changes which occurred in it during the 1960s, is, without clearly realizing it, a profoundly ideologized society in several ways, among them anticommunism. After the war and in the 1950s, there has not been, for example, a political thinker of the power and clairvoyance of Raymond Aron,[6] capable of combating the Communists using Marxism itself, knowing how to choose between what Maxime Rodinson judiciously calls "Marxist sociology" and "Marxist ideology." [7] Thus in general, the American government's approach to the political realities of North Vietnam is vitiated by ideological *a priori* assumptions which obscure the assessments made of the enemy. This is essentially what is reflected in the Pentagon Papers.

"Anti-Communist ideology," conscious or unconscious, fed by ignorance of the enemy's ideology (i.e., the tool which motivates his behavior and his actions) explains, I feel, how the U.S. experts and decisionmakers failed to understand the capacities of the enemy. To fail to understand the logic of the enemy does not prove his irrationality, but rather the limits of one's own system of thought.

A serious study of revolutionary phenomena must not underestimate the role of ideology. In Vietnam not only did the ideology disseminated by the cadres of the Viet Minh permit them to forge the means to victoriously end colonialism at Dien Bien Phu, thus bringing a solution to the crisis of Vietnamese society as a whole; but also, in the North, it permitted them to reinforce that national independence and to lay the basis for the construction of a modern industry.

On the one hand, there is national independence, and it should be remembered that Vietnam is ONE. There are few nations in Asia or elsewhere as homogeneous. Moreover, this independence is also maintained *vis à vis* the USSR and China.

On the other hand there is the effort to modernize the country through economic construction. This transformation aims at modifying the condition of the whole population and not at favoring exclusively one social class as is the case in most Third World countries. To hasten this transformation, the ideology disseminated among the masses by the cadres relying on the notions of *national dignity* and *social justice,* tends to change the *traditional relationships between time and work* by rationalizing them, i.e., by stressing efficiency. By a constant pressure,[8] which should not be characterized as violent coercion, for North Vietnam is not the USSR of Stalin's era, the cadres push the peasants to modify their traditional behavior. This effort, which is not directed simply at the propensity toward small family property, is necessary in order to make up for the historical delay which currently characterizes the so-called developing countries. This mobilizing ideology can obviously only get results, in any given phase, if the reality experienced by the masses shows no noticeable discrepancy with the reflections of it to be found in the reformers' slogans. The failure of numerous socialist experiments is explained by just such discrepancies. It is because the ideology is shared, to different degrees, by the masses, that it becomes possible to accomplish that which the traditional society of the past, stagnant, disrupted and submissive, did not seem capable of in its own eyes, as well as in the eyes of Western observers.

In North Vietnam, the ideology communicated by the party is deeply rooted in nationalism on the one hand and in Marxism-Leninism on the other. This means that the emphasis is placed on political and economic independence, class struggle, management in the hands of the controlling bureaucracy, the necessity for construction and modernization, and a more equitable distribution of wealth.

On the other hand it is important to note that since the twenties, and especially since the thirties, the Vietnamese Communist party, which was to become the Viet Minh, was *the only party to take responsibility, not only for the aspirations for social justice, but also and above all, for the national independence movement.* When the French eliminated in 1930 the "Viet Nam Quôc Dan Dang" (modeled after the Chinese Kuomintang) following their having organized a military uprising, the only other surviving Vietnamese party capable of directing the national movement was the Communists. *It was these leaders and the middle-level cadres of the party who crystallized the idea of a revolution against the humiliation caused by the colonial oppression, and who patiently forced the means to end it.*

The Geneva Accords were, in the eyes of the Vietnamese leaders, only a temporary compromise imposed as much by Soviet pressure as by circumstance. The legitimate objective of eventual reunification of Vietnam was never abandoned. Thus to underestimate, as the authors of the Pentagon Papers generally have, the nationalism of the leaders of North Vietnam shows as much *ignorance* of their history as it does of their motivations.

Thus, if the social distance between the party cadres was not very accentuated, and it never has been in Vietnam, and if the accomplishments which the masses can measure in their daily lives can be added to the regime's dynamism, then the morality which the party spreads, composed of discipline, civic spirit, austerity —in sum the puritanism of primitive accumulation—tends to give the society a cohesion and a capacity for resistance which the experts of the Pentagon Papers incorrectly attribute to nationalism alone. Certainly the bombardments reinforced the popularity of the Hanoi regime, but there can be strong national feeling without its providing the material and moral means to face the enemy.

Even with an exacerbated nationalism, the Saigon regime, if it had undergone the same bombardments as the North (even supposing that the NLF no longer existed), could not have held out. Without mentioning the problems of infrastructure, the Saigon regime lacks the social cohesion and the accomplishments which make it worthwhile for the people to sacrifice themselves in its defense. This is all the more true as the traditional social structure of Vietnam has nothing whatsoever to do with the ideology of free enterprise.

On the one hand North Vietnam was able to resist the bombing because the regime had demonstrated in 1964–1965 that it could materially improve the daily life of the North Vietnamese peasants. On the other hand, the regime even before it proceeded with the dispersion (decentralization) necessary to parry the bombing, had managed to create at the village, district, and provincial level an infrastructure unequaled in Asia (with the exception of China, North Korea, and naturally Japan). This resistance cannot be explained without an appreciation of the transformations which the regime was able to institute, especially in the countryside. Certainly important errors were committed during the agricultural reform of 1954–1956. Inspired in a mechanical way by the Chinese model, the Vietnamese agricultural reform was tainted by "leftism." In all the villages a certain percentage of the landlords were sought out; well-to-do and even middle peasants were equally dispossessed of their lands. Even patriotic landowners were treated as collaborators of the colonial administration. It is true that these errors were facilitated by the structure of Vietnamese landholdings where there were very few large landowners and no public land register. Land was scarce (three times less land per inhabitant than in India). Those who employed hired hands were considered landlords, even if they only owned seven and a half acres. Generally divided into plots, these paddy fields were distributed by the landowners among the members of their families. The first land reform, due to its Stalinist techniques, provoked in 1956 an uprising in the province of Nghe An which was repressed by the army. But unlike the Soviet Union under Stalin, collectivization and agricultural questions were not solved from beginning to end against the wishes of the peasant. In 1957, at least those errors which could be repaired were publicly rectified by the personal intervention of Ho Chi Minh, and those responsible all the way up to the top, including the general secretary of the party, Truong Chinh, were given other jobs. Meanwhile, the cultivated areas had been augmented by a fourth in comparison to 1939, the total production by 68 percent, and the individual consumption by 13 percent.

So after these difficulties, it was only very prudently, solely with volunteers, that the cooperatives were instituted in 1959. These were only generalized three years later when the state and the party could prove to the peasants that it was more *profitable* to belong to a cooperative than to remain an individual farmer. Increasing the number of hydraulic works permitted the cooperatives from one, to two, or even three harvests a year. Improving agricultural tools and techniques, limiting the free market where small landholders placed a part of their production, and increasing the amount of agricultural produce by about 4 percent were some of the proofs given the farmers.

The regime did not try to destroy the village structure, its cohesion or its solidarity. The commune served as the immediate point of departure for the cooperative. The notables were eliminated as a class, the landlords were dispossessed, but the members of the Party who directed the cooperatives all came from the village, and were not sent in from Hanoi or elsewhere. The economic improvements which the large majority of Vietnamese peasants experienced on the eve of the bombing, are indisputable: the per hectare (2.4 acres) output had reached four tons; and with the wells, the septic tanks, the threshing floors, etc., daily life itself had changed. The peasants were very far away from the years 1945–1946, when 2 million farmers died of starvation.

From 1954–1964, an educational and sanitary infrastructure was created which was widely dispersed throughout the countryside. In fact North Vietnam did not hold out because it was an agricultural country without great needs, as some experts have pretended. It held out because it had a modern, if modest, infrastructure at the level of the village and the district. Each village had a sanitary station, each district had several hospitals equipped with qualified personnel, each province had its hospital with specialized personnel and equipment. The bombing only further strengthened this infrastructure in order to respond to the problems which the air war posed: aid no matter where, no matter when. Corresponding to the medical infrastructure was the network of schools which had been extended to all the villages before the bombing began. All children from seven to ten years old followed the first course-cycle. The second and third cycles were dispensed at the district and province level. The air war does not seem to have noticeably slowed down educational activities in North Vietnam. *In fact it was their medical and educational infrastructures that enabled the regime to create the conditions for resistance among the North Vietnamese peasantry.*

Relying on these accomplishments, the North Vietnamese regime, facing the bombing, was thus able to implement and carry out the following three actions:

—facing aerial aggression, it capitalized on Vietnamese nationalism

—it mobilized the masses around the accomplishments from which they had benefited, and which were the immediate foundation of the regime and its ideology. By so doing, the regime underlined the fact that any submission to American pressures could only lead to a deterioration of these accomplishments, including the level of daily life

—in order to further strengthen this mobilization, the regime democratized to a certain extent the political structures; this encouraged the emergence of new cadres at all levels and thus reinforced the Party.

This third point is worth expanding, for it shows the vitality of the regime and its ability to adapt. Because of the bombing, North Vietnam, through the mediation of the Party, encouraged the youth, boys and girls, to occupy a more important place in Vietnamese society, namely by taking responsibilities in the militia and the cooperatives, as well as in the Party itself. Because of the decentralization instigated by the bombardments, beginning in April 1967, local planning was elaborated with much more real participation on the part of the members of the cooperatives. They could control the distribution of manufactured objects coming from the towns, check the accountants' books, elect their representatives to the Popular Council (where the proportion of Party members was not to exceed 40 percent). In 1967 a campaign was launched to eliminate the excessively bureaucratic cadres, the dishonest and the lazy, in order to promote a more democratic management. Currently every official is required to appear once a month to hear possible criticisms by the members of the cooperative. Since the institution of these democratic improvements in income distribution, the one-hectare plots previously reserved for the Administrative Committees have been abolished.

In this brief sketch, I hope I have been able to demonstrate to what extent a certain number of prejudices account for the misunderstandings of numerous American experts: systematic anticommunism; the conviction that they alone possess "rational" thought applicable to any situation; the consequent impossibility of understanding the adversary's motivations; the temptation to explain different, even if coherent, behavior by racial or religious reasons; the underestimation of the enemy due to an underestimation of his ideology.

As far as North Vietnam is concerned, such are, I believe, the roots of the failure of America's politics.

Notes

1. Townsend Hoopes (Undersecretary of the Air Force) in his book *The Limits of Intervention* (David McKay and Co., New York, 1969): "We believe the enemy can be forced to be 'reasonable,' i.e., to compromise or even capitulate, because we assume he wants to avoid pain, death and material destruction. We assume that if these are inflicted on him with increasing severity, then at some point in the process he will want to stop the suffering. Ours is a plausible strategy—for those who are rich, who love life and fear pain. But happiness, wealth and power are expectations that constitute a dimension far beyond the experience, and probably beyond the emotional comprehension of the Asian poor. For them there may be little difference between the condition of death and the condition of unrelieved suffering in life. Indeed the Buddhist belief in reincarnation tends to create a positive impetus toward honorable death, because the faithful discharge of moral and civic duties in this life are the understood passports to a higher station, greater comfort, and less suffering when one next returns to earth. And it is through such a series of trials on earth that the soul makes its slow and painful advance toward eventual unity with God. The strategy of the weak is therefore the natural choice of ideologues in Asia, for it converts Asia's capacity for endurance in

suffering into an instrument for exploiting a basic vulnerability of the Christian West. It does it, in effect, by inviting the West, which possesses unanswerable military power, to carry its strategic logic to the final conclusion, which is genocide . . ." pp. 128–129.

2. Pierre Gourou, *Les paysans du Delta Tonkinois* (Paris, 1936; second edition, Paris–The Hague, 1965).

3. It is surprising that a country embroiled directly or indirectly in a war since the end of the 1950s has not found it useful to translate the basic literature in French on Vietnam. For example: Pierre Gourou's fundamental book on the peasants of the Tonkin delta cited above (pirated and badly translated in the Human Relations Area Files); Paul Mus's *Vietnam, sociologie d'une guerre* appeared abridged in English only in 1970; basic works like Charles Robequain's *L'Evolution économique de l'Indochine française* (Paris, 1939; English edition, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1944) and his province study, *Le Thanh Hoa,* remain unknown and/or untranslated, not to mention the more recent economic studies such as: Doan Trong Truyen and Pham Thanh Vinh, *L'Edification d'une economie nationale indépendente au Vietnam* (Editions en Langues Etrangères, Hanoi, 1967); Le Chau, *Le Vietnam socialiste* (Maspero, Paris, 1966); Vo Nhan Tri, *Croissance economique de la Republique Democratique du Vietnam, 1945–1965* (Editions en Langues Etrangères, Hanoi, 1967); Leon Lavallée, Françoise Direr and Edith Bouché, *L'Economie du Nord Vietnam, 1960–1970* (Cahiers du C.E.R.M. #94 and #94 bis, Paris, 1971).

4. Correct; under pressure from the USSR. But the conditions in what had been the "Socialist camp" have since changed.

5. Another quality attributed to Ho Chi Minh is to have known how to choose and exploit the "favorable moment."

6. Raymond Aron, *Peace & War* (Praeger, New York, 1967).

7. Maxime Rodinson, *"Sociologie marxiste et idéologie marxiste," Diogène* (#64, Oct.–Dec. 1968), pp. 70–104.

8. This does not infer a kind of police coercion, but rather a social pressure grounded in the traditions of the rural communities where the individual holds a very secondary place compared with the collective interests.

7. "Tell Your Friends that We're People"

by Don Luce

The human consequences of American policy toward Vietnam have not been considered by U.S. policymakers. The private memos, official statements and policy speeches leave out the Vietnamese refugees, children, farmers and slum dwellers . . . and the American GI. They are all missing in the Pentagon Papers.

I remember trying to discuss the breakdown of the family structure with Ambassador Bunker in 1967. "Do they [the refugees] need more Bulgar wheat and cooking oil?" he kept asking me. He could not understand, or he did not want to understand, that the Vietnamese did not want, or need, American relief. They wanted to see the end to the defoliation and bombing so that they could return to their farms.

In May 1971, I was ordered to leave Vietnam for "special reasons." I had taken two American Congressmen to the Tiger Cages of Con Son. Before leaving, I asked the Vietnamese with whom I worked to tell me what they would like me to say to my American friends.

"Tell your friends that we're people," they said. "We're not slants, slopes, gooks or dinks. We're people!"

The Vietnamese feel that they have been presented by U.S. government officials and the news media for so long as statistics and kill ratios that Americans have forgotten that they are people with many of the same aspirations, dreams and fears that we have. To many Americans, the Vietnamese have become the nonpeople.

How has this happened? In reading the Pentagon Papers I was struck by the fact that none of the writers of the different documents could speak, read, or write Vietnamese. We have never had an ambassador in Vietnam who could say "hello" in Vietnamese. Our decisionmakers have all had to depend on interpreters or the elite class of Vietnamese who speak English for their understanding of that country. The result has been that our officials have learned how the farm people and workers feel from the educated English-speaking community—something like learning about the farmers in Iowa and Nebraska from Harvard professors or about New York City dock workers from Smith College co-eds.

The Vietnamese language is hard to learn. It is tonal and, unlike most European languages, has no similarity to English. (When Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara once tried to shout in Vietnamese "Long Live Vietnam" to a group of Saigonese, he got the tones mixed up. Raising his arms high in a victory gesture, he shouted: "The Southern Duck Wants to Lie Down.")

We have lost more than 50,000 American lives and $150 billion of our na-

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tional wealth there. Yet a few months of language study has never been required from our decisionmakers.

Often the Vietnamese see things differently than U.S. officials. For example:

—An NLF soldier enters a village, shoots at a U.S. spotter plane, and then runs away. The pilot of the plane sends a message to headquarters and the village is bombed or bombarded. I have discussed this with U.S. army officers. They know the NLF soldiers usually leave the village immediately after shooting at the plane, but, one explained, the village is bombed so that "someday the villagers will learn if they allow Viet Cong in their village they're going to get bombed."

The villagers look at it differently. They were bombed by airplanes, they say, and only the Americans have airplanes. Therefore, as long as the Americans are there, they'll be bombed. The solution, as it appears to them, is to join the NLF.

—In the Ba Long An Peninsula of Quang Ngai province and other areas where the machine-gunning of farm people by U.S. planes has been most prevalent, the farmers have learned to stand still and point their heads at the airplanes so they will make a smaller target as the planes look down on them.

"We used to lie down," they explain. "But now we stand there and point our heads at the planes. Fewer people are killed that way."

American pilots explain that they could still hit the farmers, but the fact that they just stand there indicates that they have nothing to hide—they're not Viet Cong.

Ironically, the farmers have learned this "trick" from the NLF cadre.

Often the villagers are warned before the bombardment. U.S. government officials carefully explain to visitors how much care is taken to prevent *innocent* civilian casualties.

One method described as "surprisingly successful" by the U.S. Air Force is the "I told you so" approach. Super Skymaster planes drop leaflets or use air-recorded tapes from powerful loudspeakers over suspected NLF areas telling everyone to *Chieu Hoi,* or come to the side of the Saigon government. A 1971 press release (#4016) by the Directorate of Information, Headquarters Seventh Air Force described the purpose of the psyops (psychological operations) leaflets this way:

> The message also contains a warning. A warning of attacks by planes and artillery. As the psyops aircraft moves away U.S. Air Force, Republic of Vietnam Air Force, or Royal Australian Air Force fighter bombers blanket the area with a barrage of firepower. Before the smoke clears the psyops pilot returns with another tape message, promising more of the same to the survivors who do not rally. "This is why we call it the 'I told you so' approach," Lieutenant Loss said.

In Quang Ngai province of Central Vietnam, the Americal Division has used tape recordings from an airplane to warn the villagers. A plane flies over the village a ten- or twenty-second tape tells the villagers to leave immediately. Tape number T7-21A-70, used in 1971, announces:

> Attention citizens: You must leave this area immediately. There will be artillery and air strikes tomorrow morning. Evacuate to the east to avoid an accident. There will be artillery and airstrikes tomorrow morning. Evacuate to the east.

If there are NLF in the village, they pick up their guns and leave. Or, as some of the refugees say, the NLF soldiers stay and help the people to pack—perhaps discussing the cruelty of the Americans in making them move!

The villagers gather together their buffalo, pigs, chickens, rice and children. Then the grandparents refuse to leave.

"We've lived here for seventy years," the old people say. "Our parents lived here and are buried here. We will not leave the graves of the ancestors."

And the only way that the family can get the grandparents to leave is to tell them that if they don't the grandchildren will be killed.

The family leaves the coconut trees, the rice fields and the graves of the ancestors—all those things that have held the family together and been meaningful. The rice-planting songs and the evening stories told by Grandfather about days gone by are replaced by the thud of bombs. The people are crowded into the city slums and around the air bases. Their houses, if they have any, are built of cardboard, U.S. government cement and tin, or artillery-shell packing boxes. The bewildered, apathetic people sit in front of these dwellings staring at the ground. The six-cent-a-day refugee payments are held up by bureaucracy, or never come at all.

But the Vietnamese are a resilient people. They survive.

The men who once plowed the acre or two of riceland join one army or the other.

The women try to sing the old rice-planting songs as they wash the khaki uniforms of foreign soldiers. In the evenings they no longer shell beans or preserve the food for the dry season as their children crowd around the grandparents, who tell stories of when they were boys and girls. Now they worry about their husbands and when, or if, their children will return from shining shoes.

The seventeen- and eighteen-year-old girls who once helped their mothers plant rice and preserve food receive visits in the refugee camps by madames who offer them lots of money to work in the bars and brothels. The family needs money, so they go and, if they are lucky, they become temporary wives for soldiers. They are paid well—often in Salem cigarettes, Tide soap, and perhaps even a T.V. set. When their soldier goes back to the United States, they are passed on to his buddy or they go back to the bar to find another husband. They have children. They want children because they cannot imagine their soldier leaving them if they have a child. Children, they feel, are the most precious possession that a man can have.

Between 100,000 and 200,000 Amer-Asian children have been born in Vietnam. The French, during their war, provided health care for the mothers and educational benefits for the children. Today, the French/Vietnamese are among the best educated in the country. They are teachers, lawyers and other professional people. The U.S. government has ignored the existence of the Amer-Asian children—they might add fuel to the peace movement in the United States. Vietnamese women who have caught VD from U.S. soldiers must find their own source of penicillin (often outdated and watered-down penicillin from quack doctors). No provisions have been made for the education of the Amer-Asian children in Vietnam. "They should be treated like any other children," is the position of U.S. officials. This ignores the extra problems that they and their mothers face.

The refugee children who once tended the buffalo and caught fish and shrimp in the canals and rice fields now shine shoes, watch and wash cars, sell peanuts, pimp, steal, and push drugs. Once, in the late afternoon when Dad and the buffalo were tired, they learned to plow. Now their education is learning to exist in the jungle of the city slums. Each day in the late afternoon, they can be seen beginning their rounds of the bars and brothels, pushing their wares and changing money.

Six-year-old boys make more money than their parents and the smallest boys make the most money because they are the cutest and the soldiers pay them more. The children run away from home and sleep on the streets. Often they are picked up by a corrupt policeman. If they can pay the 100-piaster bribe (25 cents), they are released. If they can't, they are sent to jail for vagrancy. Each day in the Vietnamese newspapers, you can see ads with a picture of a little boy or girl:

> Lost child: Our child, Tran Van Be, age seven, ran away from home last year. Please help us to find him.

Between 5 and 6 million Vietnamese people have been moved from their farm homes into the city slums and refugee camps. Most of these people have been forced off their land by Allied firepower. In 1958, less than a million people lived in Saigon; ten years later, its population had tripled to 3 million. Saigon became the world's most densely populated city with twice the population density of Tokyo, its nearest rival. With the crowding came disease. The U.S. troops brought their goods in tin cans, the rat population increased, and now there is the danger of bubonic plague. Tuberculosis and dysentery are rampant.

There are more Vietnamese doctors in France than in Vietnam. The few doctors that are in Vietnam are usually in the army or treating the very rich. American, British, German, Philippine, and other medical programs have given vaccines and dedicated service. Without them, epidemics would have caused even more havoc. These medical people have worked very hard—there are not only the sick, but, especially, the war-wounded (most of them victims of the U.S. bombardments). Patients are crowded two or three to a bed. Sometimes medicines have been cut off. Dr. Eric Wulff, a German doctor working at the Hue hospital, explained in late 1966 that all the penicillin and sulfa drugs had been cut off to that hospital as a punishment to the Buddhists for their part in the anti–Saigon government Struggle Movement.

Our officials have occasionally voiced concern about the "other war." In mid-1965, General Maxwell Taylor, the American ambassador, expressed the fear that the NLF might "swamp the agencies of the Vietnamese government engaged in the care and handling of refugees." While this has never happened—the villagers are the families and neighbors of the NLF—Allied firepower has driven them in. In Binh Dinh province, thousands of refugees were generated by a Search And Destroy (SAD) mission in 1966. A team from the Ministry of Social Welfare in Saigon went to Binh Dinh and reported back:

> The number of refugees increases day by day. Social Welfare Service can't control because of the lack of personnel. This number will be increased and also belongs to the operations settled by us and the Allied armies in order to seize the land. For example, in Bong Son the Operation Than Phong II created about 5,000 people who took refuge in the city. These people have not received anything as of a week ago. The refugee settlements of the district can't contain all of them, for that they have to stay under the porch roofs of the school. Many families go to beg, because they miss all things.[1]

In 1966, Robert Komer expressed his ambivalence in one of his famous "Komergrams" from Washington to Deputy Ambassador Porter in Saigon:

> We here deeply concerned by growing number of refugees. Latest reports indicate that as of 31 August, a total of 1,361,288 had been processed . . . Of course, in some ways, increased flow of refugees is a plus. It helps deprive VC of recruiting potential and rice growers, and is partly indicative of growing peasant desire seek security on our side.
>
> Question arises, however, of whether we and GVN adequately set up to deal with increased refugee flow of this magnitude (Gravel edition, II:569).

But Robert Komer believed in numbers and in mass brute force. Later, he wrote:

> Wastefully, expensively, but nonetheless indisputably, we are winning the war in the South. Few of our programs—civil or military—are very efficient, but we are grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass . . . (Gravel ed., II:575).

The United States has made more "Viet Cong" than it has killed. When a farmer's tomatoes or papaya are defoliated, that farmer becomes more sympathetic to the NLF. When families are forced to leave their homes and the burial grounds of their ancestors, they hate the people who move them. The lack of understanding of the Vietnamese and the disregard for Vietnamese life expressed throughout the Pentagon Papers has been militarily self-defeating.

For example, the United States forced the farm people into the refugee camps in order to deprive the NLF of food, intelligence and personnel. But by placing so many people sympathetic to the NLF right in the middle of city slums, the NLF had a base of operations during the 1968 Tet offensive. Guns and ammunition were brought into Saigon prior to the Tet offensive in mock funerals. The "coffins" were buried in the cemeteries, where the refugees had been forced to build their shacks because of lack of any other space. The NLF soldiers moved in with friends, relatives and sympathizers just prior to Tet. And while the children lit firecrackers, the men test-fired their rifles. When the offensive began, there were plenty of refugees to show them the police stations and act as guides through the alleyways that form the jungles of Saigon.

The NLF made a misjudgment too. In their offensive, they did not expect that the Allies would bomb the Allied cities. "We just did not expect that the United States would bomb Saigon, Hue and the other cities," I was told by one NLF official. The U.S. major who said about Ben Tre, "It became necessary to destroy the town to save it," was describing in a very real sense what has happened to all of Vietnam. To the military, there was no other alternative.

When the refugees came into the cities, they were paid well to wash the khaki uniforms, serve the meals, sleep with the soldiers, make souvenirs, build the airports and roads, and shine the big, black shoes. The mamasans, papasans, hootchmaids, and all the others smoldered in anger—but they were paid well. Some became agents for the NLF and some left for the jungle to join NFL units. But mostly, they just existed. As Vietnamization came along, existing became harder.

Take Mr. Vinh, for example. In 1966, his wife and two children moved to Tam Ky, near Chu Lai Air Base, after one of his children was wounded by napalm. Two years later, he and the other three children followed when it became impossible to farm their land because of the military action. In the hills, Mr. Vinh had ten acres of land, two buffalo, several pigs, some chickens, a fruit orchard, and plenty of rice paddy land. Now he makes bamboo mugs to sell as souvenirs to the soldiers at Chu Lai. But now there are fewer soldiers and Mr. Vinh cannot sell all of the bamboo mugs that he makes. Security is no better in the hills of Quang Tin province and he cannot return to his farm.

There is not a single decisionmaker in Vietnam who can talk directly with Mr. Vinh and the millions of poor people like him. So the information is secondhand. The Pentagon and State Department officials have been concerned with the relationships among the Vietnamese generals and politicians and how to bring a coup against Ngo Dinh Diem. But seldom, if ever, have they been concerned about the people. Nowhere is this brought out as clearly as in the Pentagon Papers.

There is a street in Saigon called Cong Ly, which means Justice in English. It so happens that Cong Ly is a one-way street. So the Vietnamese have a saying: "Justice in Vietnam is a one-way street."

About five years ago, Vu Thi Dung was brought to the United States to study about democracy in an American high school. She was an excellent student and graduated from high school here and went back to Vietnam and went to the university. When the one-man presidential elections were held in October 1971, Miss Dung protested these. One-man elections, she said, are what dictators have —not democracy. She was arrested, interrogated, and finally signed a "confession" saying that she had participated in and encouraged other students to participate in demonstrations against the elections.

There is something ironic about sending a young girl to this country to study democracy, then sending her back to Vietnam and paying the police who arrested and interrogated her for protesting the one-man elections.

There are 100,000 political prisoners in the Vietnamese jails. These include Truong Dinh Dzu, the runner-up in the 1967 presidential elections, Tran Ngoc Chau, the National Assemblyman who received the largest majority of votes in the 1967 Assembly race, and at least four newspaper editors. But mostly they are peasant farm people caught in the middle or politically resisting the Saigon government—though not joining the NLF with weapons.

As the urban unrest grew, the United States responded with more and more aid to the police. In 1963, the Vietnamese police force was 16,000. By 1971, it had reached 113,000. The United States has built the Interrogation Centers, provided the tear gas, and supplied increasing quantities of sophisticated equipment to the police. In April 1970, eleven students were released from Chi Hoa prison. They had slivers under their fingernails, small burns caused by their interrogators extinguishing cigarettes in sensitive parts of the body, and black-and-blue welts all over their bodies. A group of American volunteers who had seen the students were concerned about the use of American money and equipment in the torture of the students. They went to Ambassador Bunker's office to set up an appointment. They were told that Ambassador Bunker could not see them and were sent to Deputy Ambassador Berger's office. His office said that the deputy ambassador could not see them and sent them on to Youth Affairs, which sent them to the U.S. AID Public Safety Director. He would not talk to the group and sent them on to the American who advised the Vietnamese prison system. He told them that their problem was at too high a level for him and that they should see Ambassador Bunker.

The Saigon government has used an increasing amount of repression to control the growing urban unrest. Two laws which the Saigon government has used most frequently are:

Article 2 of Decree Law Number 93/SL/CT of 1964, which states: "Shall be considered as pro-Communist neutralist a person who commits acts of propaganda for and incitement of Neutralism; these acts are assimilated to acts of jeopardizing public security."

Article 19 of Decree Law Number 004/66 of 1966, which states: "Those persons considered dangerous to the national defense and public security may be [without trial] interned in a prison or banished from designated areas for a maximum period of two years, which is renewable. . . ."

The U.S. government has encouraged the use of the police against *all* political opposition. In the 1970 Annual Report from the Director of the United States Agency for International Development in Vietnam to Ambassador Bunker, the role of the police is described:

> During 1970 the police continued to improve their capability in traditional police functions. Their timely and positive action effectively contained civil disturbances involving war veterans, students and religious groups, thereby preventing the spread of violence.

Assistance to the police and prisons has steadily increased. In February 1970, $20.9 million was spent on the police and prisons; thirty million dollars was budgeted for February 1971. (As a comparison, aid to public health went from $27.8 million down to $25 million and aid to education went from $6.1 million down to $4.5 million in the same period.)[2]

After the discovery of the Tiger Cages at Con Son prison island and the subsequent international press coverage, the Saigon government held a press conference announcing that it was doing away with the Tiger Cages. Two months later, they ordered the political prisoners on the island to build new ones as a "self-help project." The prisoners refused to build their own Tiger Cages and were put back into shackles. On January 7, 1971, the Department of the Navy gave a $400,000 contract to Raymond, Morrison, Knutson-Brown, Root, and Jones to build an "isolation compound" to replace the Tiger Cages. The new cells are six feet by eight feet, or two square feet smaller than the former five by ten foot Tiger Cages. There were 120 Tiger Cages built by the French; now there are 386 "isolation cells" built by the United States.

The Vietnamese have protested the building of "new Tiger Cages" by the U.S. government. On February 25, 1971, for example, *Con Ong* (*The Bee*) printed a full-page cartoon of President Nixon unloading a new Tiger Cage for the Vietnamese. The poor people are shouting up to President Nixon as he unloads the boat, "Oh, this is needed more than schools, hospitals, churches, pagodas or clothes for our women!"

There is nothing the Vietnamese can do to protest U.S. policy in Vietnam short of demonstrating or joining the NLF. For example, when Vice-President Agnew went to Vietnam in the autumn of 1970, a group of twenty-one Vietnamese women tried to see him:

"We are the Mothers of the political prisoners detained in the various prisons of South Vietnam," they wrote. "None of our children is convicted of crime or robbery. All of them are being imprisoned because they have dared spoken of Peace and Independence, a most profound desire of all the Vietnamese People after years and years of war. Our children were arrested and barbarously tortured. They have been denied food and drink, even medicine when they are sick."

The guards at the U.S. embassy would not allow the leader of the women, Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh, to enter the embassy to give the letter to Vice-President Agnew.

Nor would they take the letter into the embassy or use the phone which they had at the gate to inform anyone inside the embassy that the women had a petition to give to the Vice-President.

"The police forces which arrest and repress our children are being paid by the Americans," they wrote. "The equipment used by the Police to repress, torture, and jail our children is part of the U.S. aid. The tear gas, the rockets used to repress them are 'made in U.S.A.' We actually witnessed the terrible repression being carried out right in front of the U.S. embassy when we and our foreign friends demonstrated against the prison system on July 11th, 1970. . . . Our children witness the presence of American advisors at the prisons. They know that more aid is being given to build more and bigger prisons."

The women presented sixteen suggested improvements. These included: No citizen shall be arrested without lawful grounds. All prisoners should be provided proper food and drink and appropriate care when they are sick. The prisoners should be allowed to write to their families. Parents should be notified when children are arrested. Criminal prisoners should not be used to guard political prisoners. Prisoners whose jail terms have expired should be released. Tiger cages, cattle cages, mysterious caves, separate cells, discipline cells and rooms used for inhumane tortures should be abolished. When a prisoner dies, his body should be returned to his family for proper burial.

"The role of the American advisors should be to improve the prisoners' conditions, not merely watch the tortures done to our children, who suffer from hunger, thirst, disease and survive in agony in jail," the women argued.

But there is no way for average citizens of Vietnam to indicate how they would like to see U.S. aid given. Nothing is said in the Pentagon Papers about how a farm woman or a market saleslady might indicate how she would like to see American help used. If the Pentagon Papers were translated for the Vietnamese farm people, they would see things being done just as they were while the French were there. They saw no help coming to them then nor was there any way for them to change the "system" when the French were there except for armed revolution. Things have not changed.

One other group of people that the decisionmakers who wrote the memos in the Pentagon Papers ignored is the American soldiers. Most American soldiers go to Vietnam thinking that they are going to help the Vietnamese. When they arrive, they find that the Vietnamese don't want them there. They are demonstrating against U.S. policy. U.S. jeeps are being burned and signs are painted on the sidewalk walls: "GI go home." The American soldier goes to Vietnam to fight communism. Yet none of the soldiers knows who the Communists are. Everyone wears black pajamas!

He is frustrated, and often terribly bored. He is looking for help, some kind of escape. His officer tells him to be a man and go on to battle. He finds the chaplaincy as conservative as General William Westmoreland. It's Christ's war, he's told, and given a prayer book:

> Guide me, direct me in my military duty. You know what my responsibility is: if I must use force, let it be without hatred for the enemy as a person, but only with greater love of what I believe is better, good, true and necessary to defend so that "Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come." Jesus, You are the God of both me and the enemy—You made us both. Because of You, I respect the dignity of all men, even my enemy. If I kill or injure anyone in my duty, I pray You will have mercy on their

> souls and families. Help me, dear God, to fulfull my military duty in line with genuine Christian principles, honor and true justice.[3]

The American soldier becomes part of the push-button war. If he is a pilot, he drops bombs on a village without any idea of whom he is killing. Through electronic devices called "people sniffers," or seismic sensors, body heat can be picked up in remote jungle areas. A signal is sent by the electronic "people sniffers" to headquarters and the area is bombed by airplanes or bombarded by 105 or 155 howitzer guns. The "people sniffers" cannot tell the difference between North Vietnamese soldiers, Montagnard women going to market, or farmers getting bamboo to fix their homes. They cannot even tell the difference between people and animals. One soldier told me about following fifty or so "bodies" moving southward on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The area was bombed and he was on the detail sent out to make the body count. They got twenty-seven—monkeys.

The American soldier is looking for escape. And he finds more "escape" and solace in heroin than he does from his officers or chaplains. In May 1971, heroin was selling for two dollars a vial. It could be bought from almost any cigarette saleslady and from many of the shoeshine boys (who sometimes got hooked when soldiers would get them to sniff it so that they could watch the boy's reaction). By mid-1971, 15 percent of the U.S. soldiers were using hard drugs. One reason for the high number of nonhostile casualties has been the ODs (overdoses). The purity of heroin in Vietnam is about 95 percent. Men who used heroin in the U.S. before going to Vietnam got it in the U.S. at 10 percent purity. When the same amount of powder was used in Vietnam, it killed the soldier. Another problem has been that two dollars' worth of heroin in Vietnam will cost $50 or $100 in the United States. The returning addict often resorts to stealing or pushing drugs to others. The problem of addiction has almost been ignored by the Veterans' Hospitals in this country.

The officials who made the decisions that got us deeper and deeper into Vietnam have moved on—McNamara to head the World Bank, McGeorge Bundy to head the Ford Foundation, William Bundy to edit *Foreign Affairs*. Each has been given a new job in one of the foundations or institutions where our foreign and domestic policies are made. Perhaps it should not surprise us to find that the officials who treated the Vietnamese so callously would treat Americans (or Brazilians, East Pakistanis, Greeks, etc.) any differently.

The similarities to Vietnam are obvious. In Vietnam, the growing police force has not been used to combat the growing crime rate, but to control and repress political opposition. In the United States, where the police and crime are both increasing rapidly, the police and court systems are being used more and more often as political forces. An increasing amount of surveillance is being used; mass arrests in Washington and other large cities have become frequent; the Washington *Post*, *New York Times* and other newspapers were censored on the question of the Pentagon Papers.

In Vietnam, one whole organization, International Voluntary Services, was kicked out of that country for being "too political." The Vietnam director, Hugh Manke, had testified before the Kennedy Senate Subcommittee on Refugees and protested the forced movement of the Montagnards from their mountain homes into the city slums. One of the IVS team members, Alex Shimkin, had told a *New York Times* reporter about the forced use of farm labor to clear a mine field in Ba Chuc village in the Mekong delta when American officials there refused to act even after some of the farm people were killed and several wounded. In Charleston, West Virginia, a group of volunteers from VISTA, a domestic group which is similar to IVS, were fired for stirring up trouble there. They had helped the mountain people around Charleston get school lunches for their children and to protest the inequalities between elementary education for mountain children and Charleston children.

Another example can be found in the different standards of justice for the rich and for the poor. In Vietnam, when Pham Chi Thien was caught smuggling a million dollars' worth of heroin into Saigon, he just continued his job as congressman. When election time came, he was allowed to run for office again (he lost!). But poor people caught stealing ten pounds of rice, or students caught in peace demonstrations, can spend five years in jail. As a parallel, when Bobby Baker was caught at extortion involving hundreds of thousands of dollars at the highest levels of our government, he was sentenced to less time in jail than George Jackson spent when he was charged with stealing seventy dollars' worth of groceries.

The Pentagon Papers came as a shock to this country. Most people feel powerless, though. We have seen and heard our highest officials lie and violate the international agreement on warfare before. Yet most feel helpless to cope with the actions of high officials.

While Lieutenant Calley was being tried, Vice-President Spiro Agnew appeared on "Face the Nation" (May 3, 1970) to explain the invasion of Cambodia: "The purpose of the strikes into the sanctuaries is not to go into Cambodia," the Vice-President said, "but to take and reduce these supply depots, the hospital complexes. . . ." To re-emphasize his point, he added five minutes later: "But they cannot move these facilities such as hospitals. . . ."

Article 19 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of 12 August 1959 states: "Fixed establishments and mobile medical units of the Medical Service may in no circumstances be attacked, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict."

In Vietnam some American adventurers managed several small groups of Vietnamese dance girls who went out to the remote American outposts to put on their show. The final act was to auction off the leading lady to one of the U.S. military officers.

The Pentagon Papers show the United States callously pursuing its own selfish motives through the Second Indochina War without regard for the people of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos or concern for America. Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned is that a person cannot destroy another person without destroying something of himself; a nation cannot destroy another nation without destroying something of itself.

Notes

1. *Viet Nam: The Unheard Voices,* by Don Luce and John Sommer, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1969, pages 181–182.

2. *Report to the Ambassador* from the Director of the United States Agency for International Development, 1970, pages 42 and 43.

3. From *A Soldier Prays in Vietnam,* "Prayer for the Enemy," page 13 (no publisher is listed on the pamphlet). It is passed out by chaplains and at the USO.

8. The Superdomino in Postwar Asia: Japan in and Out of the Pentagon Papers

by John W. Dower

Pursuing references to Japan in the Pentagon Papers is somewhat like entering an echo chamber. Several concepts formulated by the National Security Council (NSC) around 1949 return again and again in subsequent NSC documents through the 1960s; reverberate in the opinions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; carom off into the public statements of official spokesmen.[1] Refinements occur over time, but are less striking than the dogged repetition of certain catch phrases concerning Japan and its projected role in the American structuring of Asia. There are no great surprises in these documents insofar as an understanding of postwar U.S.-Japanese relations is concerned; presumedly these relations were addressed more directly in the diplomatic papers used for the original Pentagon study but withheld from publication. Certainly the full story of Japan's role in postwar Asia will require access to "Japan Papers" in both Japanese and English at least as voluminous as the Pentagon Papers, and most probably more complex. Still, with the Pentagon Papers plus a variety of other materials which have recently become available, it is now possible to structure the general course of Japan's postwar development in a more meaningful way. The essay which follows is an attempt to suggest one such framework of analysis—and, more importantly, to point to certain questions and problems which seem to demand particularly careful attention and study in the future—and to do so as much as possible by letting the sources utilized speak for themselves.

Since 1945 the course taken by Japan has been influenced by a single outside power, the United States, to an extent rare outside the history of colonial countries. That influence has been less criminal than the American impact upon Vietnam and Indochina; it has been less brutally tragic than the U.S. role *vis-à-vis* Korea. But it has not necessarily been less pervasive than in these other cases, and thus the study of postwar Japan becomes virtually inseparable from the examination of U.S.-Japanese relations. That is not the only focus possible or essential, of course—and indeed most scholars dealing with postwar Japan tend to blur this issue—but without this perspective, developments within Japan, to say nothing of the thrust of Japan's role in Asia, simply cannot be comprehended. The interlocks are complex and everywhere, and the key to these locks lies not so much in Japan itself as in American cold-war policy toward Asia. Economic, political and social change in post-1945 Japan has been shaped (and misshapen) by this. Japan's postwar role in all Asia has little meaning apart from this. And just as U.S. policy has been the key to an understanding of Japan over the last several decades, so in turn Japan has been the single most important key to American policy in Asia during this same period. Neither the Korean War nor the isolation and containment of China nor the Vietnam and Indochina wars can be understood apart from the role played by Japan in American eyes. In U.S. policy

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toward Asia, in the word of those who made it, was that "keystone." It remains so today, for the keystone is now also the third most powerful nation in the world.

In the pages which follow, this relationship is approached from several directions. Section 1 draws mostly upon the Pentagon Papers to document what has long been obvious: that Japan, more than Korea and more than Southeast Asia, has always been viewed by American policymakers as the superdomino in Asia (like Germany in Europe), and much of America's postwar Asian policy has derived from adherence to this simplistic metaphor. Section 2 relates this perspective on the domino theory to the American creation, beginning around 1949, of a U.S.–Japan–Southeast Asia nexus aimed at the creation of a capitalist bloc in Asia and an economic and military noose around China. It traces the purportedly new "regionalism" of the Nixon Doctrine through all postwar U.S. administrations prior to Nixon. Section 3 examines the U.S.-Japan relationship as, in effect, a twentieth-century version of the unequal-treaty systems under which Westerners have always felt most comfortable when dealing with Asians. It suggests some of the levers manipulated by the United States to gain Japanese acquiescence to the Pax Americana in Asia. And by focusing primarily on the occupation period and its immediate aftermath, this section attempts to briefly suggest the way in which domestic developments within Japan have been shaped by American power.

Section 4 addresses the role of war and militarization in postwar Japanese development, and points out some generally neglected anomalies in the nature of both the U.S.-Japan military relationship and the thrust of Japanese rearmament. Although the Japanese economic "miracle" has been intimately coupled with war since the nineteenth century, and thus offers the possibility for a searching case study into problems of capitalism and imperialism, bourgeois scholars have tended to skirt this problem. It is, in fact, somewhat skirted here also, but the question is raised for the postwar Japanese economy, and in particular attention is drawn to the correlation between U.S. escalation of the war in Vietnam in 1964–1965 and the simultaneous Japanese move toward economic hegemony in its two ex-colonies, Taiwan and the southern part of Korea. Section 5 attempts to structure some of the paradoxes of the postwar relationship by examining American attitudes regarding the potential of Sino-Japanese economic relations, the superficially ironic fear of an American "loss of face" in Japan, the gap between the Japanese ruling elites and the Japanese public, and the potential of the Japanese masses for revolutionary action (thus prompting, among other things, conscious cultural imperialism on the part of the United States). On the surface, the totalistic (either/or) superdomino framework, which the Pentagon Papers reveal as having guided American policy toward Japan up to the mid-1960s, seems irrational and even paranoid. One explanation for this, it is finally suggested here, can be located in the conceptualizations of "totalitarianism," "authoritarianism," or "collectivism" fashionable among liberals during this (and earlier) periods. That is, American policymakers were possessed by a fear of Japanese "accommodation to communism" because they saw a fundamental identity between the politics of the political right and the politics of the political left. Communism and fascism blurred under the rubric of authoritarianism, and confronted by a Japan moving increasingly to the right under U.S. pressure, the question inevitably arose: How far right is left?

The final and longest section deals with Japan since 1968, that is, since the period covered by the Pentagon Papers, and outlines the striking contradictions which have emerged with seeming suddenness to characterize the U.S.-Japan alliance. The discussion focuses on Japan's emergence as a "superpower," on economic tensions between the two countries, and on the decidedly new stage of military escalation which Japan has embarked upon under U.S. pressure. It asks, in brief: Where is Japan going? The economic crisis is approached through a revealing document recently released by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Japanese militarism is addressed through Congressional hearings and reports, Chinese critiques, and analysis of the 1969 Nixon-Sato joint communiqué, the Okinawa reversion trade-offs, and two key documents issued by the Japanese Defense Agency in 1970. The final pages of the essay summarize the position taken by American spokesmen who view the Nixon-Kissinger rapprochement toward China as a potential disaster insofar as the U.S.-Japan relationship is concerned and who, in the conclusion reached here, in a sense seem to have brought the situation full circle: to the superdomino, and the apocalypse.

1. THE SUPERDOMINO

Because of their particular focus on Vietnam, the Pentagon Papers offer largely a tunnel vision of Japan as the ultimate domino. Thus, in what the Papers describe as the "classic statement of the domino theory," it is argued that should the United States fail in its objectives in Vietnam, the consequences would extend far beyond Southeast Asia:

> Even the Philippines would become shaky, and the threat to India on the West, Australia and New Zealand to the South, and Taiwan, Korea, and Japan to the North and East would be greatly increased (Gravel edition, III:3, 51).

How would Japan respond to this "threat"? The Papers are clear on this. In the most sanguine appraisal, Japan would be "pressured to assume at best, a neutralist role" (Gravel ed., II:664). More probably, Japan would move into the Communist camp:

> Orientation of Japan toward the West is the keystone of United States policy in the Far East. In the judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the loss of Southeast Asia to Communism would, through economic and political pressures, drive Japan into an accommodation with the Communist Bloc. The communization of Japan would be the probable ultimate result.
>
> The rice, tin, rubber, and oil of Southeast Asia and the industrial capacity of Japan are the essential elements which Red China needs to build a monolithic military structure far more formidable than that of Japan prior to World War II. If this complex of military power is permitted to develop to its full potential, it would ultimately control the entire Western and Southwestern Pacific region and would threaten South Asia and the Middle East (Gravel ed., I:450).

This apocalyptic appraisal dominates these documents, shared in common by civilian and military policymakers. Japan's estrangement from the United States would cause the collapse of the entire U.S. military and economic strategy in the Pacific, South Asia, and the Middle East—until eventually a threat to the very "security and stability of Europe, could be expected to ensue" (Gravel ed., I:452; cf. I:375, 386, 463). John Foster Dulles often evoked this image of

Japan as the global superdomino in his public speeches in the late 1940s and 1950s. The Pentagon Papers make it clear that the famous Dulles rhetoric actually was, and remained, an internal touchstone of U.S. policy at the highest levels.

Japan has been the key to postwar American policy in Asia since approximately 1948 because, quite simply, it is strategically located and possesses immense war-making potential. George Kennan revealed in his *Memoirs* that, as head of the NSC Planning Staff, he stressed this point upon returning from a visit to occupied Japan in February and March, 1948.[2] In one of the most valuable documents pertaining to Japan among the Pentagon Papers—an NSC draft of December 23, 1949, based on NSC 48 and reprinted only in the government's own edition—this point received forceful emphasis:

> If Japan, the principal component of a Far Eastern war-making complex, were added to the Stalinist bloc, the Soviet Asian base could become a source of strength capable of shifting the balance of world power to the disadvantage of the United States. . . .
>
> In the power potential of Asia, Japan plays the most important part by reason of its industrious, aggressive population, providing a larger pool of trained manpower, its integrated internal communications system with a demonstrated potential for an efficient merchant marine, its already developed industrial base and its strategic position. . . .
>
> The industrial plant of Japan would be the richest strategic prize in the Far East for the USSR. . . .
>
> From the military point of view, the United States must maintain a minimum position in Asia if a successful defense is to be achieved against future Soviet aggression. This minimum position is considered to consist of at least our present military position in the Asian offshore island chain, and in the event of war its denial to the Communists. The chain represents our first line of defense and in addition, our first line of offense from which we may seek to reduce the area of Communist control, using whatever means we can develop, without, however, using sizeable United States armed forces. The first line of strategic defense should include Japan, the Ryukyus, and the Philippines. This minimum position will permit control of the main lines of communication necessary to United States strategic development of the important sections of the Asian area.[3]

The 1949 NSC position bore a strong Kennan imprint, distinguishing between the respectively dismal and bright power potentials of China and Japan on the one hand, and between the Soviet Union and China as threats to the United States on the other hand. The policy at this time was overwhelmingly anti-Soviet, and in fact the NSC took care to emphasize that "The USSR is the primary target of those economic policies designed to contain or turn back Soviet-Communist imperialism and not China or any of the Soviet satellites considered as individual countries."[4] As late as the basic "New Look" document of the Eisenhower Administration in October 1953 (NSC 162/2), the possibility that the People's Republic of China might assert its independence from the USSR was still acknowledged, but by this time the observation was irrelevant and Japan's strategic role—originally conceived *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union—was simply retooled to counter the "Communist Bloc" or, increasingly from the time of the Korean War, simply "Communist China." Under the Kennedy Administration, occasionally commended for its less dogmatic view of China, the People's Republic was in fact elevated to the position of foremost enemy, and Japan's role was seen primarily in this context.[5]

However vaguely or precisely the enemy has been defined—the Soviet Bloc or the Communist Bloc, the USSR or China, North Korea or North Vietnam—Japan's strategic importance has remained essentially the same. Both militarily and economically it was developed to become the linchpin of U.S. forward containment in Southeast as well as Northeast Asia. Its functions have been many-faceted. On the military side Japan, including Okinawa, provides extensive bases and services to the U.S. Air Force and Seventh Fleet, plus its own evolving military capabilities. Economically it has been directed to shore up America's faltering Asian allies through exports, aid, and investments—while in turn drawing sustenance from them in the form of raw materials plus trade and investment profits. Japan's role *vis-à-vis* China, clear since 1950, has been to contain it militarily, isolate it economically, and enable other less developed countries on China's periphery to do likewise.

2. THE U.S.-JAPAN-SOUTHEAST ASIA NEXUS

The Pentagon Papers reveal not only the "keystone" role of Japan, but also the fact that creation of triangular, mutually reinforcing relations between the United States, Japan, and Southeast Asia has been integral to American objectives in Asia since the late 1940s. This policy actually preceded the firm U.S. commitment to rigid isolation of China, and was merely intensified by the adoption of the containment strategy. In the December 23, 1949, NSC document, this was stressed from the Japanese point of view:

> While scrupulously avoiding assumption of responsibility for raising Asiatic living standards, it is to the U.S. interest to promote the ability of these countries to maintain, on a self-supporting basis, the economic conditions prerequisite to political stability. Japan can only maintain its present living standard on a self-supporting basis if it is able to secure a greater proportion of its needed food and raw material (principally cotton) imports from the Asiatic area, in which its natural markets lie, rather than from the U.S., in which its export market is small. In view of the desirability of avoiding preponderant dependence on Chinese sources, and the limited availability of supplies from prewar sources in Korea and Formosa, this will require a considerable increase in Southern Asiatic food and raw material exports.[6]

It was also approached from the complementary perspective of Japan's capacity to contribute to economic development in non-communist Asia:

> Our interest in a viable economy in the non-Communist countries of Asia would be advanced by increased trade among such countries. Japanese and Indian industrial revival and development can contribute to enlarged intra-regional trade relations which suffered a set-back because of the economic vacuum resulting from the defeat of Japan, the devastation caused by the war in other areas and the interference and restrictions arising from extensive governmental controls.[7]

While general economic relations between Japan and China were not opposed by the NSC at this time, certain restrictions in Japan's trade with the mainland were encouraged, as was the development of alternative (non-Chinese) markets for Japan:

> It should also be our objective to prevent Chinese Communists from obtaining supplies of goods of direct military utility which might be used to threaten directly the security interests of the western powers in Asia. It is not, however, either necessary or advisable to restrict trade with China in goods which are destined for normal civilian uses within China provided safeguards are established to accomplish the two objectives mentioned above [denial of strategic goods to the USSR and China]. . . . Japan's economy cannot possibly be restored to a self-sustaining basis without a considerable volume of trade with China, the burden of Japan on the United States economy cannot be removed unless Japan's economy is restored to a self-sustaining basis and U.S. interference with natural Japanese trade relations with China would produce profound Japanese hostility. . . . While SCAP should be requested to avoid preponderant dependence on Chinese markets and sources of supply he should not be expected to apply controls upon Japan's trade with China more restrictive than those applied by Western European countries in their trade with China. At the same time, SCAP should encourage development of alternative Japanese markets elsewhere in the world, including Southern and Southeast Asia, on an economic basis.[8]

Comparable policies concerning Japan and Southeast Asia were briefly reemphasized by the NSC in a document prepared four months prior to the San Francisco peace conference of September 1951, with the added specific goal of encouraging Japanese military production for use "in Japan and in other non-communist countries of Asia" [9] (see Section 3 below).

The exact point at which the United States abandoned its policy of permitting Japan to restore relations with China remains unclear, although it is known that both Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida and Britain's Foreign Minister Herbert Morrison participated in the San Francisco peace conference with Dulles' assurances that after independence Japan would be free to establish relations with China—as in fact both the Japanese and British desired. Following the peace conference, however, Dulles foreclosed this option. In December 1951 he journeyed to Japan to inform Yoshida that the price of Congressional ratification of the peace treaty would be a Japanese pledge of nonrelations with the People's Republic. The Japanese had little choice but to comply, and the resultant "Yoshida Letter" of December 1951 was Japan's ticket to second-class independence in America's Asia.[10] Under CHINCOM (China Committee), the U.S.-directed international group established in September 1952 to formalize an embargo on exports to China, "independent" Japan was maneuvered into acceptance of controls over trade with China which, until 1957, were more strict and far-reaching than the controls adhered to by any other country with the exception of the United States. Writing on this subject in 1967, Gunnar Adler-Karlson observed that "The reasons for this are at present unknown, but the pressure from the American side on a nation defeated in the war is likely to have been the main reason." Even after the Western European countries in effect repudiated the CHINCOM restrictions in 1957, Japan's trade with China and its conformance with the continuing U.S. embargo was subject to regular discussion in meetings of the U.S.-Japanese Joint Economic Committee.[11]

With China thus substantially closed to Japan as both open market and source of raw materials, the imperatives of developing Southeast Asia (and the United States) as alternative economic partners for Japan became even greater. This was accomplished through complex economic manipulations on the part of the United States in particular, but also Japan—lucrative American military purchases in Japan ("special procurements"); military-related U.S. aid packages (the Mutual Defense Assistance, or MDA, agreements); U.S.-arranged preferential treatment for Japan through the World Bank; most-favored-nation treatment under the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); triangular tradeoffs in the export/import lists of the United States, Japan, and Southeast Asia (pivoting on U.S. Public Law 480, whereby U.S. agricultural surpluses were moved into Japan to stimulate the Japanese economy with special focus on Japanese exports to Southeast Asia); use of Japanese reparations to Southeast Asia as the cutting edge of Japan's economic penetration of the area; and so on.[12] Thus long before the 1954 Geneva Conference, the American economic blueprint for Asia tied Japan firmly to the dollar, to Southeast Asia, and to militarization and war. That the Japanese understood this perfectly was indicated in a private note to the United States of February 1952, two months before the formal restoration of Japanese sovereignty:

> Japan will contribute to the rearmament plan of the United States, supplying military goods and strategic materials by repairing and establishing defense industries with the technical and financial assistance from the United States, and thereby assure and increase a stable dollar receipt. . . . Japan will cooperate more actively with the development of South East Asia along the lines of the economic assistance programs of the United States.

The memo further stated that future Japanese economic growth would be geared to U.S. demands in Asia, and that the dollar inflow from meeting such demands would ensure Japan's emergence as one of America's chief markets.[13]

The details of these intricate transactions require further study, but the rationale behind the Japan–Southeast Asia interlock is amply available in the Pentagon Papers and indeed has long been part of the public record. The Eisenhower Administration in particular performed quotable service in this respect, for in attempting to explain the American position at the time of the 1954 Geneva Accords, U.S. spokesmen commonly evoked Japan. In one of his more resounding pronouncements, for example, Dulles declared on radio at the very moment the Geneva Conference turned to Indochina that Ho Chi Minh was a Communist "trained in Moscow" who would "deprive Japan of important foreign markets and sources of food and raw materials." [14] In a March 1954 speech entitled "The Threat of a Red Asia," he developed this further, touching in brief compass virtually all of the major points subsequent policymakers would refer to when citing the importance of Southeast Asia to Japan (food, raw materials, markets, sea and air lanes, and the offshore island chain):

> Southeast Asia is the so-called "rice bowl" which helps to feed the densely populated region that extends from India to Japan. It is rich in many raw materials, such as tin, oil, rubber, and iron ore. It offers industrial Japan potentially important markets and sources of raw materials.
>
> The area has great strategic value. Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Pacific and South Asia. It has major naval and air bases. Communist control of Southeast

> Asia would carry a grave threat to the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, with whom we have treaties of mutual assistance. The entire Western Pacific area, including the so-called "offshore island chain," would be strategically endangered (Gravel ed., I:594; cf. 600).

Eisenhower reiterated this theme in a news conference in which he emphasized the importance of Indochina in terms of "what you would call the 'falling domino' principle." Loss of the area to communism, he explained, "takes away, in its economic aspects, that region Japan must have as a trading area or Japan, in turn, will have only one place in the world to go—that is, toward the Communist areas in order to live" (Gravel ed., I:597). Near the end of his presidency, Eisenhower stressed the complementary nature of the two areas in simple terms which ignored the forced dimension of the relationship and well typify liberal American comment on this issue to the present day:

> As a different kind of example of free nation interdependence, there is Japan, where very different problems exist—but problems equally vital to the security of the free world. Japan is an essential counterweight to Communist strength in Asia. Her industrial power is the heart of any collective effort to defend the Far East against aggression.
>
> Her more than 90 million people occupy a country where the arable land is no more than that of California. More than perhaps any other industrial nation, Japan must export to live. Last year she had a trade deficit. At one time she had a thriving trade with Asia, particularly with her nearest neighbors. Much of it is gone. Her problems grow more grave.
>
> For Japan there must be more free world outlets for her products. She does not want to be compelled to become dependent as a last resort upon the Communist empire. Should she ever be forced to that extremity, the blow to free world security would be incalculable; at the least it would mean for all other free nations greater sacrifice, greater danger, and lessened economic strength.
>
> What happens depends largely on what the free world nations can, and will, do.
>
> Upon us—upon you here—in this audience—rests a heavy responsibility. We must weigh the facts, fit them into place, and decide on our course of action.
>
> For a country as large, as industrious, and as progressive as Japan to exist with the help of grant aid by others, presents no satisfactory solution. Furthermore, for us, the cost would be, over the long term, increasingly heavy. Trade is the key to a durable Japanese economy.
>
> One of Japan's greatest opportunities for increased trade lies in a free and developing Southeast Asia. So we see that the two problems I have been discussing are two parts of a single one—the great need in Japan is for raw materials; in Southern Asia it is for manufactured goods. The two regions complement each other markedly. So, by strengthening Viet-Nam and helping insure the safety of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, we gradually develop the great trade potential between this region, rich in natural resources, and highly industrialized Japan to the benefit of both. In this way freedom in the Western Pacific will be greatly strengthened and the interests of the whole free world advanced. But such a basic improvement can come about only gradually. Japan must have additional trade outlets now. These

> can be provided if each of the industrialized nations in the West does its part in liberalizing trade relations with Japan (Gravel ed., I:626–627).

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations simply followed the Eisenhower script on this score. In late September 1964, on the eve of the U.S. escalation in Vietnam, for example, William Bundy visited Japan and offered listeners there what might be called the Houdini variation of the domino principle (they don't fall, but disappear):

> We believe it essential to the interests of the free world that South Vietnam not be permitted to fall under communist control. If it does, then the rest of Southeast Asia will be in grave danger of progressively disappearing behind the Bamboo Curtain and other Asian countries like India and even in time Australia and your own nation in turn will be threatened (Gravel ed., III:723).

While the primary focus in the Japan–Southeast Asia nexus has been economic, the military side of the relationship also requires emphasis. Most obviously, this has involved U.S. reliance on bases and facilities in Japan and Okinawa for aggression in Indochina. As noted previously, well before the termination of the occupation of Japan, it was planned that part of the spin-off from Japanese remilitarization be provision of military goods to less-developed Asian nations. More important than this during the initial postwar decades, however, has been the assumption that Japan's economic involvement in Southeast Asia will both stabilize the pro-American, anti-Communist regimes there and contribute directly and indirectly to their own capacity for developing local military-related industry. Although Japanese personnel have been employed by the United States in both the Korean and Vietnam wars (as "civilian" technicians, boat crews, etc.), Japan has not yet dispatched troops abroad. As noted in Section 6 below, however, this constraint is now being eroded, and since the late 1960s the Japanese have on occasion expressed interest in future "peace-keeping" contributions in the area through dispatch of ground forces to Indochina and naval forces to the Straits of Malacca. American spokesmen also anticipate that Japan will provide increasing military "supporting assistance" to anti-Communist regimes in Southeast Asia "under the label of economic aid," and that by the mid-1970s the Japanese government will have surmounted domestic opposition to the training of foreign military personnel on Japanese soil.[15]

The corollary to integration of Japan and Southeast Asia, as noted, has been the basic American position that neither area could be allowed to establish any kind of significant economic relationship with China. This would not only strengthen China materially, but also strengthen China's influence over the two areas at the expense of American economic hegemony throughout non-Communist Asia. During the Eisenhower Administration the goal was thus to prevent a Japanese "accommodation with the Communist bloc" (Gravel ed., I:472). Under Kennedy and Johnson, the pet phrase was if anything more urgent, specific, and paranoid: a constantly reiterated fear of the "growing feeling" in Japan "that Communist China must somehow be lived with" (Gravel ed., III:219, 623, 627, 658). From the Truman through the Johnson administrations, the goal of American policy in Asia was to freeze bipolarity until an integrated capitalist network had been created which could be capable of remaining relatively invulnerable to the pressures, or temptations, of the Communist nations. In a

November 1964 memo, one of William Bundy's advisers summarized U.S. objectives in Vietnam as being to "delay China's swallowing up Southeast Asia until (a) she develops better table manners and (b) the food is somewhat more indigestible" (Gravel ed., III:592). With this image at hand, it may perhaps be concluded that Japan's role *vis-à-vis* Southeast Asia had been to help make that area indigestible—or possibly, as it is actually working out, to digest it itself.

These strategies of the early cold-war period are only now coming to fruition insofar as Japan's role is concerned. And indeed it is a striking perspective on the "Nixon Doctrine" that, despite the currently fashionable rhetoric of "regionalism" and "multilateralism," the policies advanced by the Nixon Administration are in fact very close to those which the Pentagon Papers reveal as having been the objectives of all prior postwar U.S. administrations. Whether under Truman or Eisenhower, Kennedy or Johnson, the United States has consistently aimed at the creation of Asian regional groupings which would interlock in turn with American global interests, whether economic or military. As discussed in Section 6 below, this strategy has been greatly complicated by developments which have taken place under President Nixon, notably the Sino-American rapprochement and emerging contradictions within the U.S.-Japan alliance. But at the root, current American policy remains consistent with the goals first established in the late 1940s and 1950s. "Asian regionalism" remains capitalist, anti-Communist, and anti-Chinese—whatever its new guises. Thus in the Symington Committee hearings of 1970, U. Alexis Johnson, Undersecretary of State and former ambassador to Japan, acknowledged Chinese apprehensions concerning Japan's economic penetration of Southeast Asia and then in effect confirmed the legitimacy of those fears. Discussing Japanese participation in the Asian Development Bank and the Ministerial Conference on Southeast Asia Economic Development, Johnson acknowledged that "The whole host of relationships which Japan has sought in the economic and political field with the countries of Southeast Asia obviously represents a hindrance or a block, if you will, to efforts of the Chinese to extend their influence in the area." [16] And that, of course, has always been precisely the goal.

The point should not require belaboring, but it has in fact been generally obscured: the United States has never intended to carry the burden of anti-Communist and anti-Chinese consolidation in Asia alone. It has always seen the end goal as a quasi-dependent Asian regionalism. Under Truman, the NSC stressed that "a strong trading area of the free countries of Asia would add to general economic development and strengthen their social and political stability. Some kind of regional association, facilitating interchange of information, among the non-Communist countries of Asia might become an important means of developing a favorable atmosphere for such trade among themselves and with other parts of the world." [17] By 1954, under Eisenhower, the U.S. documents are quite blunt about the ultimate goal of an Asian regionalism covertly underwritten by, militarized by, and interlocked with the capitalist powers of the West:

> It should be U.S. policy to develop within the UN charter a Far Eastern regional arrangement subscribed and underwritten by the major European powers with interests in the Pacific.
>
> *a.* Full accomplishment of such an arrangement can only be developed in the long term and should therefore be preceded by the development, through indigenous sources, of regional economic and cultural agreements between the several Southeast Asian countries and later with Japan. Such agreements might take a form similar to that of the OEEC in Europe.

> *Action:* State, CIA, FOA
>
> *b.* Upon the basis of such agreements, the U.S. should actively but unobtrusively seek their expansion into mutual defense agreements and should for this purpose be prepared to underwrite such agreements with military and economic aid . . . (Gravel ed., I:475).

John F. Kennedy, just prior to assumption of the Presidency, expressed the anti-China regionalism concept in these terms:

> The real question is what should be done about the harsh facts that China is a powerful and aggressive nation. The dangerous situation now existing can be remedied only by a strong and successful India, a strong and successful Japan, and some kind of regional group over Southeast Asia which gives these smaller countries the feeling that, in spite of their distaste for a military alliance, they will not be left to be picked off one by one at the whim of the Peiping regime (Gravel ed., II:799).

Under Lyndon Johnson, in 1967, the goal appeared to be almost within grasp:

> The fact is that the trends in Asia today are running mostly for, not against, our interests (witness Indonesia and the Chinese confusion); there is no reason to be pessimistic about our ability over the next decade or two to fashion alliances and combinations (involving especially Japan and India) sufficient to keep China from encroaching too far (Gravel ed., IV:174).

All postwar administrations have recognized the sensitivity of Asian nations to Western neo-colonial domination. All have sought to encourage anti-Communist regional groupings in Asia, led by Japan with the United States in the wings. And at the heart of all such policies, up to and including the Nixon Doctrine, has been the U.S.–Japan–Southeast Asia nexus. In their constant reiteration of this objective, of course, U.S. policymakers have conveniently neglected to give due weight to one of its most obvious and unpleasant flaws: the fact that most Asian nationalists are also acutely sensitive to the very real threat of Japanese neo-colonialism.

3. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL DIALECTICS

The integration of Japan into America's Asia undoubtedly profited the Japanese state in a number of ways, but the long-range costs may prove to be far greater than the immediate dividends. For U.S. pressure on Japan has inevitably shaped not only Japan's external policy, but its internal development as well. This has been particularly obvious in the rapid recartelization and remilitarization of the Japanese economy, but the social and political consequences within Japan have been no less profound. Whether directly or indirectly, for example, political polarization within contemporary Japan is virtually inseparable from American designs for postwar Japan and postwar Asia. Economic priorities have been largely shaped in accordance with U.S. requirements, and this in turn has supported a ruling class with predictably conservative goals in education, civil liberties, "quality-of-life" problems, and the like. The initial thrust in this direction, as suggested in the preceding sections, was imposed while Japan was still under U.S. occupation; beginning around 1947–1948, it took the form of a "reverse course" repudiating many of the early reform goals of the occupation. What must be stressed here, however, is that the termination of the occupation in April 1952 did not greatly change anything. The United States retained imposing *de facto* control over the course of Japanese development. And under the conservative Japanese ruling coalition which had been firmly entrenched by the end of the occupation, the reverse course has continued, step by step, to the present day.

In blunt terms, the United States has had to buy Japan's allegiance to American strategy in postwar Asia. There is room for considerable debate over the tactics of this: what the price has been, how it has been paid, and how it has changed over time. But the fact of Japan's subordinate and quasi-mercenary status *vis-à-vis* the United States for the greater part of the postwar era is rarely denied any longer even by the spokesmen of the two countries. In the Symington Committee hearings, for example, U. Alexis Johnson engaged in this exchange with Senators William Fulbright and Stuart Symington:

> *SENATOR FULBRIGHT:* . . . If we go out and hire foreign governments and pay them to agree with us, I think we are perhaps cutting off the source of good advice. We ought to go in more as equals and say, "What do you think about it?" If they say, "You are being a fool," we ought to take it seriously.
>
> *MR. JOHNSON:* All I can say, Senator, is that insofar as Japan is concerned, I do not feel that our expenditures in Japan are any significant factor in Japanese attitudes.
>
> *SENATOR SYMINGTON:* Any more.
>
> *MR. JOHNSON:* Any more.
>
> *SENATOR SYMINGTON:* They were once.
>
> *MR. JOHNSON:* Oh, yes. I agree. I do not think they are any more.[18]

Roughly a year later, in February 1971, Aiichiro Fujiyama—a leading Japanese businessman, conservative politician, and former Foreign Minister—implicitly disagreed with the Johnson view only to the extent of denying that Japan had yet escaped this subordination. In an interview with a correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review,* Fujiyama explained Japan's China policy as follows:

> *Q. Why do you think the government takes what appears to be a minority view not only in the international community but in Japan as well, and does it think this policy conforms with the national interest?*
>
> A. It operates, jointly with Taiwan and South Korea, within the framework of U.S. Asia policy, and cannot deviate from this basic line. Some people believe that to keep China out of spheres where it might clash with Japan serves their own brand of national interest.

"Our foreign ministry," Fujiyama went on to note, "is just following the Washington line." Then, in a rather striking comment for a member of the ruling Liberal-Democratic party, he proceeded to acknowledge that the "social climate" which had developed in Japan under the reverse course and the Washington line had indeed increased the possibility of Japanese militarism:

> *Q. In your talks with the Chinese leaders, how will you account for the charges of the revival of Japanese militarism which are bound to come up?*
>
> A. China has been very sensitive to foreign domination since the days of

> Sun Yat-sen. It has reason—no country has suffered more from Japanese militarism than China. Militarism may not be a state of armament alone. It may be just as much a problem of mentality, a state of mind. I strongly feel that these charges of militarism are largely directed against the social climate of Japan, which is susceptible to totalitarianism. Individualism is still in a very young stage here; I think it is for us Japanese to rethink and reappraise ourselves rather than to refute or deny foreign charges. I strongly fear the current trend in which the younger generation is increasingly showing interest in war, if not accepting it. It is our responsibility to drive home that war is not a romantic affair.[19]

The pathetic response of the Japanese government to the Nixon Administration's sudden overtures to China in 1971–1972 can only be understood in this context. Long accustomed to being bought off, they were not, however, prepared to be sold out.

The origins and nature of the reverse course in occupied Japan remain a subject of considerable interest. One basic issue still requiring fuller documentation here is the very question of U.S. motivations in initiating this turn of policy away from the initial occupation goals of "demilitarization and democratization." With the notable exception of mainstream American scholarship on the subject, most observers have attributed this to cold-war geopolitics—that is, the reverse course is seen primarily as part of America's larger strategic decision to contain the Soviet Union and, increasingly, impede the course of revolution in China and throughout Asia. American scholars, on the other hand, have tended to adopt a more internalized view and justify the reverse course largely in terms of the need to remedy (for the good of Japan) the economic chaos existing within the country at that time; at the same time, they argue, it was necessary to get Japan on its feet economically in order to "preserve the reforms" and ease the tax burden which the occupation was imposing on the American people (some half billion dollars annually). In this view, strategic cold-war considerations were secondary to more practical economic concerns within Japan itself, and the United States did not really repudiate its generally idealistic original goals for Japan. Recent documentary collections such as the Pentagon Papers, the John Foster Dulles papers, and the papers of Joseph M. Dodge, who engineered the economic reverse course in occupied Japan, make continued adherence to the American Altruism Abroad School of postwar Japanese history increasingly a matter of mystical commitment. But at the very same time, these materials do raise provocative questions concerning the extent to which fundamentally economic considerations *on a global scale* may have taken precedence in both time and importance over more strictly military geopolitical concerns. The recent revisionist work of Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, for example, argues flatly that "Washington's considerations in Japan were first and foremost economic," meaning preservation of a global capitalist system, and developments in China only "added urgency" to the decision to "insure a *self-supporting* capitalist Japan." [20]

The Pentagon Papers shed only belated light on this particular issue, for the earliest document of importance which deals at any length with Japan dates from December 1949, by which time the reverse course was already in full swing—having been initiated, significantly, long before the "anti-Japanese" Sino-Soviet Pact of February 1950 and a matter of *years* before the outbreak of the Korean War. The essence of this initial reverse course was indeed U.S. support for the emergence of a dependable, capitalist ruling class in Japan, and beginning in

1948 Shigeru Yoshida, with increasing U.S. support, began to fashion the "tripod" of big business, bureaucracy, and conservative party which has controlled Japan to the present day. The tentacles of this development were many; emanating from the fundamental reversal in economic policy, they reached out to strangle early reforms in the political, social, and military spheres as well. Zaibatsu dissolution was abandoned and recartelization encouraged; reparations were temporarily curtailed to hasten capital formation; restrictions on the production of hitherto banned war-related materials were lifted; purgees and war criminals were released; the working class was crippled through antilabor legislation plus wage freezes and "retrenchment" policies; "Red purges" (Japan's McCarthyism) were instituted to eliminate the leaders of effective dissent in both the private and public sectors; and so on.

By 1948–1949, the reverse course had also moved into overtly military directions. In November 1948 the NSC, spurred by Kennan's recommendations, called for the creation of a large national police force capable of suppressing domestic unrest in Japan. As the Communists consolidated their victory in China in 1949, it became known that severe divisions had emerged within the U.S. government over the future military disposition of Japan, with the Department of Defense opposed to relinquishing any U.S. control over the Japanese islands whatsoever. In November 1949, the State Department gave public indication of an apparent resolution of this internal debate by announcing that the United States was willing to seek a peace settlement with Japan conditional upon the indefinite post-treaty stationing of U.S. military forces in Japan. In fact, however, this did not assuage the Defense Department or resolve the debate in Washington. Dulles was brought into the State Department by President Truman in April 1950 to bring "bipartisanship" to the Japan issue, and on the eve of the Korean War Dulles was in Japan attempting to sell Yoshida on the U.S.'s latest price for sovereignty: Japanese remilitarization and rearmament—in addition to the post-independence presence of American troops.[21]

The Pentagon Papers include, in the government edition only, two NSC documents which deal at some length with policy toward occupied Japan. The first, dated December 23, 1949, and drawing upon position papers prepared earlier that year (notably NSC 48), is especially provocative, for it offers not only a rare glimpse of American officials musing on the national character of Japan, but also a defense of the road Japan was subsequently not allowed to take: the middle road in a multipolar, not bipolarized, Asia. It is important, in other words, that this document be read with the awareness that it was issued by the NSC at a time when Japan policy was the subject of intense controversy in Washington, and thus represents only one corner of the debate taking place at that time. In all likelihood it reflects the economically oriented position endorsed by George Kennan at this time and subsequently militarized by the U.S. government—thus, in Kennan's view, freezing America's options in Asia and very possibly contributing to the outbreak of the war in Korea.[22] Since the document is relatively inaccessible, the main sections on Japan are reproduced here:

> 8. Japan has ceased to be a world power, but retains the capability of becoming once more a significant Asiatic power. Whether its potential is developed and the way in which it is used will strongly influence the future patterns of politics in Asia. As a result of the occupation, Japan's political structure has been basically altered and notable steps have been taken toward the development of democratic institutions and practices. Despite these advances, however, traditional social patterns, antithetical to democracy, re-

main strong. The demonstrated susceptibility of these patterns to totalitarian exploitation is enhanced by economic maladjustment which may grow more serious as a result of population increases and of obstacles to the expansion of trade.

9. Although, in terms of the Japanese context, an extreme right-wing movement might be more effective in exploiting traditional patterns and current dislocations than one of the extreme left, a number of factors combine to make the threat of Communism a serious one. These factors include the close proximity to a weak and disarmed Japan of Communist areas with the attendant opportunities for infiltration, clandestine support of Japanese Communist efforts, and diplomatic pressure backed by a powerful threat; the potential of Communist China as a source of raw materials vital to Japan and a market for its goods; and the existence in Japan of an ably-led, aggressive, if still relatively weak, Communist movement which may be able to utilize Japanese tendencies toward passive acceptance of leadership to further its drive for power while at the same time exploiting economic hardship to undermine the acceptability to the Japanese of other social patterns that are antithetical to Communist doctrines.

10. Even if totalitarian patterns in Japan were to reassert themselves in the form of extreme right-wing rather than Communist domination, the prospect would remain that Japan would find more compelling the political and economic factors moving it toward accommodation to the Soviet orbit internationally, however anti-Communist its internal policies, than those that move it toward military alliance with the United States. Extreme right-wing domination of Japan, moreover, although less immediately menacing to the United States than Communist control would represent a failure, particularly marked in the eyes of other non-Communist Asiatic countries, of a major United States political effort.

11. A middle of the road regime in Japan retaining the spirit of the reform program, even if not necessarily the letter, would in the long-run prove more reliable as an ally of the United States than would an extreme right-wing totalitarian government. Under such a regime the channels would be open for those elements in Japan that have gained most from the occupation to exercise their influence over government policy and to mold public opinion. Such a regime would undoubtedly wish to maintain normal political and economic relations with the Communist bloc and, in the absence of open hostilities, would probably resist complete identification either with the interests of the United States or the Soviet Union. The existence of such a regime, however, will make possible the most effective exercise of United States political and economic influence in the direction of ensuring Japan's friendship, its ability to withstand external and internal Communist pressure, and its further development in a democratic direction.

12. The basic United States non-military objectives in Japan, therefore, remain the promotion of democratic forces and economic stability before and after the peace settlement. To further this objective the United States must seek to reduce to a minimum occupation or post-occupation interference in the processes of Japanese government while at the same time providing protection for the basic achievements of the occupation and the advice and assistance that will enable the Japanese themselves to perpetuate these achievements; provide further economic assistance to Japan and, in concert with its allies, facilitate the development of mutually beneficial economic relations between Japan and all other countries of the world; make it

> clear to Japan that the United States will support it against external aggression while at the same time avoiding the appearance that its policies in Japan are dictated solely by considerations of strategic self-interest and guarding against Japan's exploitation of its strategic value to the United States for ends contrary to United States policy interests; and promote the acceptance of Japan as a peaceful, sovereign member of the community of nations.[23]

The Korean War became the pretext for repudiation of even the qualified flexibility of this NSC position; and by the time of the San Francisco peace conference of September 1951 it had been almost completely thrown to the winds. The remilitarization and remonopolization of the Japanese economy had been set on an inexorable course. The Japanese military was under reconstruction in the guise of a National Police Reserve. The way had been opened for the return of prewar rightist politicians, businessmen, and military officers to influential positions in both the public and private sectors. The Japanese labor movement was in disarray, partly through subversion by American labor organizations. Political dissent in Japan, under immense pressure from both U.S. spokesmen and the Japanese conservatives, was relegated to a position of increasing impotence. The peace conference itself, widely hailed to the present day by most Americans as possibly Dulles' most notable achievement, was indeed a rather unique accomplishment: a "separate peace" for Asia, without Asians. The Soviet Union did not participate because of the militaristic provisions embodied in the concurrent U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty—and indeed U.S. policymakers had recognized from before the Korean War that such arrangements would inevitably exclude the possibility of Soviet concurrence. China did not participate because it was not permitted to do so; under the ruse of letting the Japanese themselves resolve the issue of relations with Peking or the Kuomintang regime at a later date, Dulles gained agreement that no Chinese representatives would be invited to the conference—and then, with this *fait accompli* behind him, forced the Japanese into relations with Taiwan. India, Indonesia, and Burma, in fundamental disagreement with the Dulles style of statesmanship, refused to participate. The Philippines signed the treaty only after making known that it was in fact not to their liking. Indeed, Asian apprehension concerning the unilateral American policy toward Japan which culminated at San Francisco was assuaged only by Dulles' simultaneous negotiation of military alliances with Australia and New Zealand (ANZUS), as well as the Philippines—pacts demanded of the United States at this time as insurance against future *Japanese* aggression.

The second document in the government edition of the Pentagon Papers which deals with pre-independence policy for postindependence Japan was prepared by the NSC in May 1951, four months before the peace conference, and is quite succinct on Japan's projected role:

> With respect to Japan the United States should:
>
> *a.* Proceed urgently to conclude a peace settlement with Japan on the basis of the position already determined by the President, through urgent efforts to obtain agreement to this position by as many nations which participated in the war with Japan as possible.
>
> *b.* Proceed urgently with the negotiation of bilateral security arrangements with Japan on the basis of the position determined by the President to be concluded simultaneously with a peace treaty.
>
> *c.* Assist Japan to become economically self-supporting and to produce

goods and services important to the United States and to the economic stability of the non-communist area of Asia.

d. Pending the conclusion of a peace settlement continue to:

(1) Take such steps as will facilitate transition from occupation status to restoration of sovereignty.

(2) Assist Japan in organizing, training, and equipping the National Police Reserve and the Maritime Safety Patrol in order to facilitate the formation of an effective military establishment.

e. Following the conclusion of a peace settlement:

(1) Assist Japan in the development of appropriate military forces.

(2) Assist Japan in the production of low-cost military materiel in volume for use in Japan and in other non-communist countries of Asia.

(3) Take all practicable steps to achieve Japanese membership in the United Nations and participation in a regional security arrangement.

(4) Establish appropriate psychological programs designed to further orient the Japanese toward the free world and away from communism.[24]

As Joseph Dodge observed even more tersely in January 1952, Japan's post-treaty obligations to the United States would be as follows:

> (1) Production of goods and services important to the United States and the economic stabilization of non-Communist Asia; (2) Production of low cost military material in volume for use in Japan and non-Communist Asia; (3) Development of its own appropriate military forces as a defensive shield and to permit the redeployment of United States forces.[25]

Following the restoration of independence, Japan in fact followed the Dodge outline, a path significantly distant from that urged earlier by Kennan. "Middle of the road" domestic politics in Japan was so quickly abandoned that by 1957 Nobusuke Kishi, former economic czar of Manchukuo and wartime Vice Munitions Minister under Tojo, had emerged as Prime Minister with Mitsubishi backing and gladly renewed old interests as Munitions Minister for the Eisenhower Administration. "Middle of the road" external policies were so far beyond Japan's capability or concern by 1957 that, as head of his party's foreign policy committee, Kishi blithely appointed Kaya Okinobu, reputed architect of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity sphere concept.[26] War, expansion into Southeast Asia, and the United States—which together had brought Japan to shambles by 1945—became, within a matter of years, the determinants of Japanese reconstruction.

4. REAL, IMAGINARY, AND MIRACULOUS WARS

SENATOR CHURCH: "Mr. Secretary, is it the policy of the administration to urge Japan to modernize its armed forces or to expand its military budget?"

SECRETARY [*of State*] *ROGERS:* "Yes."

SENATOR CHURCH: "That is a snappy answer."

SECRETARY ROGERS: "Well, it is a snappy question."

—from the Senate hearings on the
Okinawa Reversion Treaty, October 1971 [27]

Although the Secretary of State did not mention it, the military relationship between the United States and Japan also involves some fairly snappy anomalies. Some examples:

> By 1970 it was acknowledged that "Japan has the capacity of defending, now defending, Japan proper against a major conventional attack." [28] Yet in 1970 the Japanese government, with strong U.S. support, announced its Fourth Defense Plan calling for a defense budget for the 1972–1976 period which is more than fifty percent larger than prior expenditures under the First, Second, and Third Defense Plans combined. It is anticipated, moreover, that the Fifth Defense Plan will show a comparable increase over the Fourth.
>
> While the primary mission of Japan's "Self Defense Forces" is ostensibly defense of Japan against conventional external attack, there is in fact no meaningful evidence that any other Asian country in recent history has ever planned a direct military attack on Japan. On the contrary, historically the threat has been from Japan against continental Asia (through Korea), and not the other way around. The public statements of Washington's spokesmen have, of course, been full of Communist conspiracies, timetables, plans of world conquest. The Korean War, it was argued, was aimed at Japan, and there is no doubt that some American policymakers, particularly on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, actually believed this to be the case. Theoretically the Soviet Union in the postwar period *has* been capable of invading Japan, although this would require (1) extraordinarily complex mobilization of amphibious forces; and (2) that the Kremlin's leaders be insane. George Kennan, hardly one to think charitably of Soviet intentions, found no evidence to indicate that the Russians had "any intention to launch an outright military attack" against Japan at the time of the Korean War, and there has been no hard evidence to the contrary since.[29] China, on the other hand, has never posed even the theoretical possibility of a conventional attack on Japan. As U. Alexis Johnson noted as late as 1970, "lacking air and over water transport, for their forces, the Chinese Communists do not now pose a direct conventional threat against Japan." [30] This evaluation is widely accepted by virtually all American experts on Chinese military development, and it is furthermore now acknowledged that China has no military programs underway to create a capability of offensive action against Japan. On the contrary, the Chinese military is almost exclusively oriented toward defense. Most postwar Japanese leaders, even in the conservative ranks, have always held this view—even in the early years of the cold war when it ran counter to the official U.S. line.[31]
>
> The United States maintains some 30,000 military personnel on 125 facilities covering 75,000 acres in Japan proper; as of September 1969 the Defense Department classified 40 of these bases as "major." In Okinawa after reversion the United States will maintain approximately 50,000 American servicemen on eighty-eight military installations covering another 75,000 acres (26 percent of all the land on Okinawa). Yet none of these U.S. forces are directly concerned with the defense of Japan, and indeed—as noted by former White House and Pentagon adviser Morton Halperin—"none of the forces in our general purpose force structure are justified by the requirements of the defense of Japan." [32]

> The USSR could pose a nuclear threat to Japan, and China is presumedly now developing a modest capability of the same sort. Should a serious nuclear strike against Japan actually take place, there would be little left for Japan to do (and little left of Japan's industrial heart), and the burden of response would fall upon U.S. nuclear retaliation. Extension of the U.S. nuclear shield to cover Japan thus presumedly deters such attack. However, U.S. bases in Japan are theoretically irrelevant to this deterrence since under the U.S.-Japan agreement nuclear weapons are excluded from Japan. And the United States has given flat assurances that there will be no nuclear weapons on Okinawa after reversion.[33] It is sometimes argued that the American nuclear guarantee to Japan means U.S. taxpayers are actually paying for Japan's defense. On the contrary, as Halperin notes, "The U.S. nuclear umbrella, which does protect Japan, would not be any smaller or any different if Japanese security were not one of its functions." [34]

Then what is the significance of American bases in Japan, and of Japan's steadily accelerating rearmament? First, in U. Alexis Johnson's words, "Our position in our facilities, bases in Japan as well as in Okinawa, are not so much related directly to the defense of Japan and Okinawa as they are to our ability to support our commitments elsewhere." More specifically:

> The bases and facilities provided by Japan under the provisions of the Treaty are especially important to our ability to maintain our commitments to the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China. Although we maintain no ground combat forces in Japan, our rear area logistics depots, the communications sites, the large and well equipped naval facilities and airfields, hospitals, and so on, have also been important factors in our ability to support and maintain our forces in Southeast Asia.[35]

Simply put, the bases in Japan exist to support America's clients in "that whole part of the world": South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. Even those military advisers who now see technological advances as permitting a substantial reduction in the U.S. forward position in Asia emphasize that access to the key air and naval bases in Japan must remain a bedrock of U.S. strategy.[36] The superdomino argument of the Pentagon Papers can easily be applied to explain how the use of Japan for commitments elsewhere is in the end a commitment to Japan: if the lesser clients fall, so eventually will the greater, and in the end the bases in Japan, in this view, do keep Japan safe for America.

A second level of concern is why Japan, steadily remilitarizing since 1950 and already capable of its own conventional defense, is about to embark upon an entirely new level of military expansion. Here the official spokesmen of both the United States and Japan are naturally wary. They deny that Japan is attempting to develop the capability of military activity outside its borders. But at the same time the definition of those borders ("defense perimeter") is being dramatically revised. As described more fully in Section 6, this is precisely the implication of the 1969 Nixon-Sato communiqué. While hedging on the issue of Japanese troops abroad, the Nixon Administration has been frank and even boastful in explaining the price it exacted from Prime Minister Sato in return for the reversion of Okinawa: Sato's official statement ("quite a new stage of thinking in Japan," according to Johnson[37]) that henceforth Japan will regard its own security as inseparable from that of Korea and Taiwan. To students of Japanese history, this "new stage of thinking" has quite old and tangled roots, and immediately evokes Aritomo Yamagata's formulation of the "lines of sovereignty, lines of defense" concept in the 1890s, following which Japan lopped off Korea (the Japanese used German military advisers in those days). For students of contemporary Japan, the 1969 communiqué calls to mind the "Three Arrows" scandal of 1965, in which secret Japanese military plans linking Japan and Korea were leaked to the public.[38] Without access to broad U.S. and Japanese documentation comparable to the Pentagon Papers, it is impossible to say what type of integrated contingency plans now exist for Northeast Asia. But it is absolutely unequivocable that a major change in public consciousness on this issue is now being effected: the "important thing that has taken place," Johnson told the Symington committee, is "that Japan is interested and involved in the defense of other areas." And in Halperin's words, "a further rearmament by the Japanese, if it were to make any sense, would have to be in the defense of other countries in Asia." [39]

The issues of bases in Japan and Japanese rearmament pose serious questions of military planning; these are fairly obvious. At another, more neglected level, however, these point to a simple and important fact: from the beginning of its modern experience, wars—real or imagined, its own or someone else's—have been the spur to economic growth and industrial take-off in Japan. Armaments were Japan's initial entree into the development of heavy industry in the nineteenth century. The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars of 1894–1895 and 1904–1905 moved it into the stage of finance capital and continental economic expansion. World War I, the war of the others, provided the boom that propelled the industrial sector ahead of the agrarian, and shaped the giant combines. Mobilization for "total war" production in the 1930s pulled Japan out of the global depression. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 turned a potentially disastrous depression deriving from the Dodge retrenchment policies into spectacular take-off, after orthodox economic policies had failed. The ravishment of another Asian country, Vietnam, heated a cooling Japanese economy from 1965. Even the ostensible exception—the eight-years' war of 1937–1945, which ended with Japan seemingly in ruins—in fact only proves the rule: for it appears now that much of Japan's postwar economic growth is directly attributable to governmental investment in equipment and technical education during the 1930s and 1940s. "The Japanese economy," in Ronald Dore's words, "has thrived on war and the prospect of war." [40] This has been as true in the postwar era as it was before 1945, and those who presently offer the "Japanese miracle" as a model to others offer a very deceptive product. Without a hundred years of actual or envisioned war to fatten on, the Japanese economy would still be lean.

Detailed examination of the role of war-related stimulation in postwar Japanese economic growth is extremely difficult, for the statistics involved are illusive, a large part of the relationship is indirect, and few scholars have attempted to come to grips with the problem. On the one hand it is possible to point to some fairly firm figures: between 1950–1960, the United States pumped a total of $6.12 billion in military "special procurements" purchases into Japan, thus comprising the single most important impetus to postwar recovery.[41] From 1946 to 1968 the United States provided some $1.07 billion in military aid to Japan and another $3.08 billion in economic aid; after repayments the net total was approximately $3.5 billion.[42] In 1970, operating costs for the U.S. bases in Japan were estimated at $490 million annually; another $460 million went into support of U.S. facilities and personnel in Okinawa each year.[43] Estimates of "war profits" enjoyed by Japan in the post-1965 Vietnam war boom vary greatly depending upon one's criteria of indirect war benefits, but generally appear to have been in the neighborhood of $1 billion annually.[44] But such figures barely touch the surface of the problem. They do not, for example, reveal the fact that U.S. aid to Japan in the 1950s was so structured that the resurrection of Japan's defense industries, coupled with the reemergence of monopolistic control, became *by U.S. design* the key to Japan's economic recovery.[45] The figures do not reveal the manner in which the United States bought Japanese acquiescence in the Pax Americana by carefully manipulating "non-military" international trade, aid, and monetary transactions to Japan's benefit. Similarly, the figures are inadequate when it comes to understanding how America's wars in Asia have benefited Japan *by default,* as ruinous military outlays drained the U.S. economy and in the process created new global markets for Japan. The military context of the Japanese economic penetration of Southeast Asia is likewise not apparent in the surface statistics—with its peculiarly cynical dimension of using war reparations to turn the savagery of Imperial Japan into a profitable new co-prosperity sphere for "peaceful" postwar Japan.[46]

One of the more recent and intriguing examples of the subtle relationship between America's military policies and Japan's economic growth has been the Japanese economic penetration of South Korea and Taiwan (also Indonesia) beginning around 1964–1965. In certain respects the situation resembles a slightly distorted looking-glass version of moves a decade and a half earlier. Thus in 1950 the Japanese economy was entering a severe depression; it was revitalized by the Korean War boom and remilitarization of Japan; and even before the war the United States had begun laying plans to lock Japan into an anti-Communist bloc with itself and Southeast Asia. In 1964–1965 the Japanese economy was cooling off; it was rekindled by the Vietnam war boom plus sudden economic access to Korea and Taiwan; and in fact, in anticipation of its escalation in Vietnam the United States appears to have worked behind the scenes to help Japan drive the opening wedge into the economies of its two former colonies. Washington's goals were transparent: as the United States prepared to divert enormous resources to an expanded war in Vietnam, only Japan had the capability of assuming part of the burden of shoring up the Park and Chiang regimes. Japan's post-1965 trade and investment statistics *vis-à-vis* South Korea and Taiwan clearly indicate that for Japan it has once again been lucrative to operate in the shadows of other's wars.

The Pentagon Papers provide little information on the U.S. role in paving the way for Japan's rapid economic expansion into South Korea and Taiwan, although high U.S. officials such as William Bundy, Dean Rusk, and Walt Rostow visited Japan in quick succession during the crucial period in late 1964 and early 1965 when the massive escalation of the Vietnam war was on the U.S. drawing boards. It is hardly likely that the sudden resolution of the Japan-ROK normalization talks which occurred shortly thereafter was purely coincidental, although it may well turn out that the leverage applied by the United States against the Koreans was most instrumental in paving the way to restoration of Korean-Japanese relations after more than a decade of bitter stalemate between the two countries; it was Korea, after all, which was letting the tiger into the house. The Papers do, however, provide an ironic sidelight on this period. At a meeting at the State Department in August 1963, Roger Hilsman "reported that there is a Korean study now underway on just how much repression the United States will tolerate before pulling out her aid" (Gravel ed., II:742). The answer was apparently plenty, but from 1965 on an immense amount of U.S. "aid" to South Korea was actually directly related to ROK participation in the Vietnam war. Japanese assistance in shoring up Korean repression became increasingly urgent from this time, a fact recognized no matter what one's stand on the Vietnam escalation. Thus George Ball, in advancing his critique of America's Vietnam policy in July 1965, stressed that Japan's role *vis-à-vis* South Korea would become even more imperative if the United States decided to seek a "compromise settlement" in South Vietnam:

> . . . if we stop pressing the Koreans for more troops to Vietnam (the Vietnamese show no desire for additional Asian forces since it affronts their sense of pride) we may be able to cushion Korean reactions to a compromise in South Vietnam by the provision of greater military and economic assistance. In this regard, Japan can play a pivotal role now that it has achieved normal relations with South Korea (Gravel ed., IV:619).

The implications of Japan's new level of involvement in Northeast Asia under these conditions cut ominously toward the future. Immediate questions concerning the extent to which Japan's overwhelming economic leverage is already crippling economic independence in Taiwan and South Korea are compounded by serious long-range questions concerning the effects of this tight embrace upon the reunification of both of the divided countries. Such involvement has not alleviated repression; it has only fed corruption. And as Japan's economic stakes in the ex-colonies grow, the likelihood of committing Japanese troops to protect those stakes also increases.

The overall Problematik implicit here is crucial. For the scholar and critic, such developments provide useful openings for an increased understanding of strategic planning, capitalism, and imperialism. For nonscholars—for the Japanese people and their neighbors more particularly—there are more urgent reasons that the system be comprehended, for the wars that may be will not be of the imaginary or miraculous variety. Those are about used up.

5. THE HOW-FAR-RIGHT-IS-LEFT DILEMMA

Washington's decisionmakers have never been really certain whether or not to trust the Japanese, and if they couldn't why they shouldn't. This is hardly a rare phenomenon among potentially competitive nation states, and the racial differences between the United States and Japan undoubtedly contribute to mutual suspicion. The "Asian mind," as Americans have never ceased to point out since they first encountered it, is "different" (Gravel ed., III:685; IV:182). And in the case of Japan, that "difference" is now coupled with power unprecedented in the history of Asia.

The paradoxes implicit in the formal U.S. attitude toward Japan are not immediately apparent, but they are nonetheless most intriguing. On the surface, Japan has until fairly recently been one of official Washington's least problematic allies. The U.S.-Japan alliance has seemed relatively stable. Japan's ruling elites have displayed rather impeccable conservative, anti-Communist credentials. The thrust of the Japanese economy ostensibly has been toward capitalism and the capitalist bloc. No external military threat has confronted Japan, and the country is presumedly entering a period of prosperity and a placated citizenry. Since 1950 Japan has allegedly been enjoying a great "free ride" at America's expense, and the "regionalism" and "multilateralism" of the Nixon Doctrine are supposed to work to the continued mutual advantage of both Japan and the United States.

More specifically, particularly since 1964 the distribution of political power within Japan could not have been more fortunate from Washington's point of view. As it happened, U.S. escalation of the war in Indochina coincided with the premiership of Eisaku Sato, whose acquiescence to U.S. policy was until recently virtually total. Sato's biannual joint communiqués with the American presidents (1965, 1967, 1969) read like State Department public relations releases on Vietnam; his endorsement of the American line on China was so thorough that it split his own party (and in the end, with Nixon's reversal of China policy, left Sato without political face in Japan). On the surface, the Pentagon Papers suggest that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations had considerable confidence in their allies in Japan. Thus in November 1964, a month after he had visited Japan, William Bundy ventured the opinion that escalation of the war against North Vietnam would in fact be welcomed by Japan's leaders, although it might have unfortunate repercussions within Japan itself:

> The Japanese government, and considerable informed opinion in Japan, would be quietly pleased by the US action against the DRV. The Japanese government would probably attempt to stay fairly aloof from the question, however, for fear of provoking extreme domestic pressures or possible Chinese Communist action against Japan. In such process, the Japanese government, especially one headed by Kono, might seek to restrict certain US base rights in Japan (Gravel ed., III:598).[47]

By 1967, Japanese support of U.S. aggression in Asia had exceeded even Bundy's expectations, and he was expressing surprise that Japan, like Britain, "accepted our recent bombings with much less outcry than I, frankly, would have anticipated" (Gravel ed., IV:156).

Yet even with the agreeable Mr. Sato on tap, and a postwar history of official Japanese endorsement of American policy in Asia, the inner record also reveals that U.S. policymakers have found many reasons for uncertainty concerning the stability of the alliance. In fact, it might be argued that the dominant impression conveyed by the Pentagon Papers is not that of confidence in the stability of the U.S.-Japan relationship, but on the contrary an almost paranoid fear that Japan could easily "go communist." Throughout the period covered in these documents (to 1968), Japan emerges in American eyes as an either/or country, capable of no constructive middle course between the Communist and capitalist camps—but fully capable, on the other hand, of swinging its weight behind the other side. Thus from the Truman through the Johnson administrations, the dominant fear expressed in the Pentagon Papers is that an American failure in Vietnam would drive Japan into an "accommodation with the Communist bloc," or into an inevitably ominous relationship with Communist China. Even the "realistic" George Ball took essentially this position in 1965 in developing his critique of Vietnam policy:

> Japan is a much more complex case. If its confidence in the basic wisdom of the American policy can be retained, Japan may now be in the mood to take an increasingly active and constructive part in Asia. If, on the other hand, the Japanese think that we have basically misjudged and mishandled the whole Vietnam situation, they may turn sharply in the direction of neutralism, and even of accommodation and really extensive relationships with Communist China. Such action would not only drastically weaken Japan's ties with the U.S. and with the West, but would render the situation,

> particularly in Korea, extremely precarious. . . . It is Ambassador Ray Shower's judgment that Japanese would be highly sensitive—partly on Asian racial grounds—to any bombing of Hanoi and presumably Haiphong. He concludes that such bombing would "have very damaging effects on the U.S./Japan relationship."
>
> As to the quest of the extent of U.S. ground forces, Ray Shower believes that from the standpoint of Japanese reaction, "We could further increase them even on a massive scale without too much further deterioration of public attitudes toward us. However, if this were to lead to a slackening of the South Vietnamese effort and a growing hostility on the part of the local population toward us, this would have catastrophic repercussions here in Japan. This is exactly what the Japanese fear may already be the situation, and if their fears were borne out in reality, there would be greatly increased public condemnation of our position. Even the Government and other supporters here would feel we had indeed got bogged down in a hopeless war against 'nationalism' in Asia. Under such circumstances it would be difficult for the government to resist demands that Japan cut itself loose as far as possible from a sinking ship of American policy in Asia" (Gravel ed., IV:614).

Four general and often paradoxical areas of concern can help illuminate the American uncertainty concerning Japan. First, and most obviously, the fear of "losing Japan" is based upon arguments of economic pressure. It is a familiar cliché that "Japan must trade to live"; moreover, Japan's continued economic growth will depend upon expanded trade. Should the present patterns which tie it into the web of world capitalism be disrupted, then Japan will be forced to seek alternative economic relations. In the particular focus of the Pentagon Papers, loss of access to Southeast Asia (or the failure of the area to develop rapidly enough to meet Japan's needs) will inevitably place pressure on Japan to move toward increased "accommodations" with non-capitalist countries. Also, despite the immense economic relationship which has developed between Japan and the United States in the postwar period, American leaders in fact have evinced lack of confidence in the stability of this relationship. On the one hand, for example, it is stated that the economic ties between the two countries are "natural" and beneficial for both parties—and, on the other hand, that there exists no comparable potential for Japan in the direction of economic ties with China. As U. Alexis Johnson argued before the Symington committee, China offers Japan neither the markets nor raw materials it needs. Moreover:

> . . . the history of trade indicates that as countries develop the greatest trade develops between developed countries, and when I was in Japan I was struck by the fact that when the Japanese use the first person plural "we" more often than not they were talking about "we, the developed countries, Japan, the United States, and Western Europe." They find their interests and their problems in rough terms parallel with the interests of the developed countries.[48]

Yet no such firm faith can be found in the policy papers of the American government. Despite the theory of the naturalness of capitalist relations; despite the immensity of Japan's present interlock with the United States in particular; and without necessarily even postulating military pressure on Japan—the basic U.S. position of Japan as the superdomino clearly was premised upon an almost totalistic view of Japan's economic complementariness to the "communist bloc," the ease with which it might simply detach itself from the global capitalist economy and "disappear" behind the Iron (or Bamboo) Curtain. Is Japan's heavy reliance upon the United States as a source for primary products really "natural"? Will the American market for Japanese exports continue to grow despite increasing domestic pressures for protectionist legislation against Japan? Is the potential for mutually beneficial economic relations between Japan and China (and other noncapitalist countries) really as limited as U.S. spokesmen publicly allege? *In practice,* American policy toward Japan appears to have been undercut by substantial uncertainty on such matters, bordering at times on paranoia.

Secondly, beginning around the mid-1960s, the economic concern became compounded by concern over American "credibility" in Japan—that is, it was recognized that Japan's consistent official endorsement of U.S. policy does not necessarily carry with it either agreement or respect, and may reach a breaking point. This observation was undoubtedly valid, and three observations may help put it in perspective: (1) There was no reason for U.S. officials to anticipate that Japan would indefinitely pretend a sense of "obligation" to the United States, for the simple reason that the United States has never done anything for Japan that it did not believe to be in the American interest. Even Secretary of State Dean Rusk did not romanticize this point. Fittingly enough, the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers concludes with a flat repudiation by Rusk of the popular conceit of "American benevolence" in Asia:

> Now, the basis for these alliances that we made in the Pacific was that the security of those areas was vital to the security of the United States. We did not go into these alliances as a matter of altruism, to do someone else a favor. We went into them because we felt that the security of Australia and the United States, New Zealand and the United States, was so interlinked that we and they ought to have an alliance with each other, and similarly with the other alliances we have in the Pacific, as with the alliance in NATO. So that these alliances themselves rest upon a sense of the national security interests of the United States and not just on a fellow feeling for friends in some other part of the world.[49]

Certainly there was no reason to expect the Japanese themselves to think otherwise. (2) As indicated earlier, Japan was integrated into America's Asia in the 1950s only under considerable pressure at a time when Japan was essentially powerless. The details of this early period have not yet been fully studied, but some of the complexity of the situation can be suggested by looking at the position of Shigeru Yoshida, usually characterized as an archconservative and America's man-in-Japan. In fact, the record indicates that Yoshida opposed the United States on the most fundamental issues of this period, namely the repressive economic policies of the Dodge Plan, isolation of China, military strings attached to U.S. aid, and rapid rearmament of Japan. The issues of Japanese remilitarization, U.S. bases in Japan and Okinawa, and Japanese acquiescence in the general U.S. line on China and Asia never had unanimous support even among Japanese conservatives, and Yoshida's ouster from the premiership in December 1954 came about to a large extent because of internal disagreements within Japan on such issues. By the mid-1960s, this had been exacerbated by opposition within conservative ranks to the U.S. war policy in Vietnam. (3) By the mid-1960s Japan was—and it *seemed* to occur suddenly—entering the "superpower" category. That is, the underpinnings of American credibility in Asia were being challenged at the very moment that it became recognized Japan no longer could be treated as a mere dependent power. Sato as an individual undoubtedly found himself more comfortable in the familiar role of subordinate, but it was increasingly and painfully obvious that the Japanese state was entering a period of unprecedented strength at the very moment the United States was plummeting to a postwar nadir.

A third element of uncertainty was the uncomfortable recognition on the part of U.S. officials that in addition to its internal splits, the Japanese ruling class as a whole does not reflect the view of the majority of Japanese people—particularly insofar as support of American policy is concerned. The Ball memorandum cited above is fairly typical in its distinction between the Japanese "government" and the Japanese "public." Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara voiced a similar grudging appreciation of the potential political potency of popular anti-American sentiments in Japan:

> The price paid for improving our image as a guarantor has been damage to our image as a country which eschews armed attacks on other nations. . . . The objection to our "warlike" image and the approval of our fulfilling our commitments competes in the minds of many nations (and individuals) in the world, producing a schizophrenia. Within such allied countries as UK and Japan, popular antagonism to the bombings per se, fear of escalation, and belief that the bombings are the main obstacle to negotiation, have created political problems for the governments in support of US policy (Gravel ed., IV:54).

Just as the ambiguous U.S. position on the prospects of Sino-Japanese relations raises the question of how great the potential economic ties between the two countries actually may be, so also in this case the American attitude raises the issue of how great the potential for radical mass political action has actually been in postwar Japan. Many American sociologists and historians of Japan have tended to minimize the possibility of effective political action from below in Japan by pointing to the traditional structures of authoritarianism and hierarchy to which most Japanese remain fundamentally acquiescent. But at the same time, looking not to scholarship but to the views held by practicing politicians, one finds in countless quarters a pervasive fear of the "revolutionary" potential of the Japanese masses. Such fear is in fact a potent theme in prewar as well as postwar Japan—one which has received little scholarly attention as yet, although primary documentation is voluminous in Japanese, American, and British sources. It was unquestionably greatly exacerbated by the extraordinary vigor of the popular lower and middle-class movements which burst into the political scene in the immediate postwar years in Japan and were repressed only by the reverse course in occupation policy. George Kennan's *Memoirs* offer a vivid example of American fear of leftist insurrection in postwar Japan, and the primary mission of the resurrected postwar military establishment (like the Meiji army of the 1870s) originally was suppression of internal threats to Japan. Mass action culminating in the Security Treaty crisis of 1960, which forced cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit to Japan, and the dramatic Japanese street demonstrations of the late 1960s, could be taken as reconfirmation of these fears. Neither Sato's accommodating manner nor the sociologists' reassuring patterns of submissive behavior could entirely dispel the nagging U.S. fear that the relationship it had so carefully knitted with the conservative ruling classes in Japan might not in fact be unravelled from the left within Japan itself.

This perspective helps explain the NSC position in May 1951 that insofar as postoccupation Japan was concerned, it was imperative that the United States "establish appropriate programs designed to further orient the Japanese toward the free world and away from communism." [50] The same fear also underlies the broad and subtle brand of cultural imperialism which American officials *and scholars* have pursued in Japan, particularly since 1960. The Asia sections of the influential Conlon Report, issued in November 1959, were written by one of America's most articulate hawks and best-known Japan specialists, Robert Scalapino, and called among other things for American "diplomacy in depth." [51] For those interested in the scholar/government symbiosis as manifested in U.S.-Japanese relations, a potentially fascinating study remains unexplored here. For it was at this juncture that Edwin O. Reischauer of Harvard was appointed ambassador to Japan, with the self-described mission of opening a "dialogue" with that country. And it was at the scholarly Hakone Conference of 1960 that American Japan specialists initiated the "modernization theory" focus which has subsequently dominated U.S. scholarship on Japan and has been, at root, an attempt to present Japan as a nonrevolutionary, anti-Marxist model of development. The goal has been to undercut both the activist and academic left in Japan, and Japanese journals throughout the 1960s contain a heavy array of articles in Japanese by American scholars engaged in this task of "diplomacy in depth."

Finally, however, it must be recognized that the concerns outlined above are not self-contained and really become meaningful only when they are placed in a broader, more theoretical (and more illusive) context. Namely this: that when one views the world from a liberal or quasi-liberal perspective, the distinctions between the political left and political right become blurred. Under vague rubrics such as "totalitarianism," the archconservative and the Communist on the surface may appear to offer little to choose between—except, perhaps, insofar as their foreign policies are concerned. Ostensibly they will hold opposing attitudes toward private property and competition—but what is one to say in the case of a *zaibatsu*-controlled economy? How is one to evaluate the close mesh of government and business in Japan? And whether the Japanese masses have revolutionary potential or are traditionally submissive, doesn't either imply an easy susceptibility to Communist control?

These are practical, not merely academic questions, and in the final analysis they are probably the key to understanding why American policymakers have been so consistently fearful of a totalistic Japanese "accommodation to communism." Having resurrected and nurtured the political right in postwar Japan, they were faced with the question of how far right the Japanese would move before they became, potentially, "left." In this sense, subsequent American administrations caught the whiplash of the reverse course of the occupation period: that is, they could never be certain that they had not cut the early reform policies off too early, and too close to the root. It is, on the surface, unreasonable to assume that a Communist Southeast Asia would knock a powerful, anti-Communist Japan almost entirely into the "Communist camp"—but it is not entirely irrational to believe that a fundamentally authoritarian Japan would, if somewhat pressed, find few bars to seeking an accommodation with other "authoritarian" countries.

This line of analysis gains credence from the fact that both Japanese and American politicians and policymakers faced it squarely at various points. This issue became, it should be noted, of absolutely central concern in Japan from the late 1930s up to 1945; the heart of the "peace" movement in wartime Japan, as evidenced most dramatically in the famous Konoe Memorial of February 1945, was the fear that the war was leading to the "communization" of Japan, primarily in the form of "right-wing communism," and even "emperor communism." [52] Again—a prewar example with postwar implications—Kishi, certainly the most reactionary of Japan's postwar prime ministers, was in the prewar period accused of Communist sympathies because of his interest in National Socialism. It was precisely this "rightist/leftist" problem which underlay the position advanced by the NSC in 1949 and reproduced at some length here in Section 3. No other U.S. document now available on Japan sets the problem down so clearly, and this must certainly be judged the most valuable of the Pentagon Papers insofar as an understanding of this dimension of the postwar U.S.-Japan relationship is concerned. Overarching all other apprehensions concerning Japan's reliability as an ally—economic pressure, U.S. credibility, revolutionary potential within Japan—was the broad structure of "totalitarian" conceptualization, the question of how far right is left.[53]

6. THE SUPERINSCRUTABLE

> *SENATOR SYMINGTON:* "Well, one final question. Is it true that the less we do in Vietnam, the more they approve our policies in the Far East?"
>
> *MR. JOHNSON:* "No."
>
> *SENATOR SYMINGTON:* "I am trying to follow your logic."
>
> *MR. JOHNSON:* "Let me put it this way: They do not want to see us lose in Vietnam. At the same time, they do not want to see us do things that they feel carry with them the danger of our being drawn into a larger war and in turn—"
>
> *SENATOR SYMINGTON:* So militarily speaking, they do not want us to lose, but they do not want us to win."
>
> *MR. JOHNSON:* "Well, you could express it that way."
>
> *SENATOR SYMINGTON:* "It is a mystery to me what has been going on out there during the past 5 years. I am glad to see it is a little complicated to you also, because you have seen more of the inside than I."
>
> —testimony of U. Alexis Johnson,
> former U.S. ambassador to Japan,
> January 1970 [54]

The question "where is Japan going" has really occurred to most Americans only in the period subsequent to that covered in the Pentagon Papers, that is, primarily during the Nixon Administration. It derives, to begin with, from the new superpower image of Japan and the unexpectedly anti-Japanese actions taken by Nixon in handling economic policy and China relations. At a deeper level it reflects a significantly new stage in Japan's economic and military development; a new, still uncertain level of nationalistic consciousness in Japan; and the open emergence of serious contradictions in the U.S.-Japan relationship.

It is of central importance to note the timing of the new stage, and in particular the *compression of the timing.* For the bulk of the postwar period, Japan has undeniably been a second-class member in America's Asia. For several decades it has been forced to nurse substantial wounds of pride, because the "lackey" image assigned it in Communist polemics unfortunately rings true.[55] In Senator Symington's eyes, for example, Japan in 1970 still remained "a conquered nation, an occupied nation." [56] And thus, from the Japanese perspective, the roles of "superpower" and "subordinate" have coalesced or overlapped. The grooves of the long unequal relationship with the United States run deep and are not easy to depart from, but the friction in those grooves is heating up.

From the American perspective this coalescence is also true, but the ambivalence is further compounded by another point of timing: the sudden recognition in the mid-1960s that Japan is the most dynamically expanding power in Asia (if not the world) coincided with the recognition that the United States, on the contrary, is a power in disarray, and certainly a waning Pacific power. Thus at the very moment that Japan approached the level the United States had supposedly always wanted (the capacity for major military and economic activity in non-Communist Asia), many Americans discovered that perhaps they had not wanted this after all. The wedding of the superdomino and superpower images, in short, produced not a super-ally but a superthreat in the view of many. Or, in the more neutral jargon of the political scientist, it might be argued that in its relationship with Japan the United States has apparently moved directly from a friendship among unequals to an "adversary friendship," without ever having been able to sustain even temporarily an interlude of amicable equality.

As a result, since the period covered by the Pentagon Papers the stereotyped apprehension of a Japanese accommodation to the Communist bloc has been replaced by other alarming visions—notably fear of a militarily resurgent Japan and premonitions of a global trade war between the United States and Japan (in which Japan is most often conceded ultimate victory) or the Japanese creation of an independent and autarkic yen bloc in Asia.[57] These more current apprehensions are not necessarily consistent with the traditional fear of a "Red" Japan, but that is of little solace to America's uneasy political and economic leaders. Nor are these fears really new. As early as 1949, the NSC cautioned that "in the course of time a threat of domination [of Asia] may come from such nations as Japan, China, or India, or from an Asiatic bloc," [58] and indeed virtually all of the world warned the United States of this possibility when it unilaterally decided to set Japan upon the reverse course. In the exigencies of daily policy, however, this caution was thrown to the winds, and the United States devoted itself to encouraging not only Japan's remilitarization and economic penetration of Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Taiwan, but also the suppression *within* Japan of outspoken opposition to such policies. The question is no longer what the United States has sown, but what Japan, Asia, and the world will reap.

Insofar as U.S. attitudes are concerned, as the decade of the 1970s opened, the Japanese, somewhat to their surprise, discovered that in conforming to U.S. postwar policy for Asia they had ultimately aroused American hostility and distrust. In August 1971, in the midst of the economic and diplomatic "Nixon shocks," the Japanese Foreign Ministry prepared a memorandum for use in government and business circles in Japan, summarizing American complaints. The document, subsequently made available in English, concluded with this summation of the "General Image of Japan arising out of the above-mentioned Criticism":

> (1) As to Japan as a Country
> A. Japan is a strange country whose attitudes can't be measured by standards valid in America and Europe and therefore Americans can't but conclude that Japan is a country whose statements and actions it is impossible for Americans to interpret reliably.

B. Japan is ungrateful for the U.S.'s generosity and help to Japan after the War.
C. Japan is pursuing her ambition to become the No. 1 country in the world and her people are all united in this purpose, without reflecting on the consequences of their actions to others.
D. Japan is extremely self-centered and insular-minded. She does not understand the spirit of mutuality or fair-play either in the field of politics or in that of economics.
E. Envy of Japan's success. (On the other hand there are some people saying that they should learn from Japan.)

(2) As to Japanese Companies and People
A. They are determinedly working to increase their share of the world's markets and are quite willing to accept very small profit margins in order to do this.
B. They are arrogant (too self-conscious of Japan's being a major power).
C. Japanese work always in groups and they work very hard even at the sacrifice of their private lives.
D. They are very difficult people to understand. Many prominent politicians and businessmen seem to make a habit of breaking promises, and being inconsistent in their words and actions, and are two-faced. Therefore Japanese are unreliable.
E. The Japanese are hated by the people of Southeast Asian countries as "ugly Japanese." Japanese are unable to understand the spirit of co-prosperity.[59]

By far the greatest part of the Foreign Ministry's document dealt with complaints concerning Japanese economic practices. The American grievances were broken down as follows: (1) invasion of the American market as a result of Japan's export drive (with specific mention of Japan's extremely favorable balance of trade with the United States, and of particular resentments over textiles, electronics, steel, and autos); (2) Japanese export practices and "system" (dumping, the "double price system for domestic and foreign markets," unique labor conditions, low wages, unique investment and borrowing practices); (3) Japanese import restrictions (tariff manipulation, duties and quotas, the import deposit system); (4) capital liberalization (ceilings and restrictions on foreign investment in Japan); (5) limitations on foreign exchange transactions (particularly in short-term capital transactions and government ordinances restricting trade); (6) governmental intervention in both trade and capital transactions (through "administrative guidance," manipulation of licenses, discourtesy to foreign businessmen, etc.); (7) the "Japan Inc." nexus of government-private business collusion (including export targets, tax relief, subsidies, loose anti-trust laws, etc.); (8) criticisms of Japan's economic policy in general (lack of cooperation in yen revaluation, no assistance to the United States in solving its balance of payments problem, niggardly and self-serving aid programs, lack of concern with environmental pollution or consumer protection); (9) natural resources (depletion of natural resources such as coal, timber, or various forms of marine life); (10) "other criticisms" (attempts to exclude American banks, and "copying foreign machinery and components for atomic reactors").[60]

The Foreign Ministry list is without question a thorough summary of American resentment concerning Japanese economic practices. What it fails to convey, however, is a sense of the doomsday rhetoric actually used by these American critics. The task of disseminating this has been undertaken by Senator Strom Thurmond, among others, who as one of the leaders of the anti-Japan movement in the United States frequently introduces into the *Congressional Record* materials containing passages such as the following (from a speech to an Atlanta audience):

> The economic challenge posed by Japan—and I suggest that you think of Japan as a single, giant company under centralized direction—is the gravest economic challenge this country has ever faced.
>
> Here in Atlanta, I am reminded of Henry Grady's famous speech about the Georgia man who died and was buried in a Northern-made suit, in a grave dug by a Northern-made shovel and laid to rest under a piece of stone from the North. Georgia's only contribution was the corpse and the hole in the ground. Well, it is not an exaggeration to say that our entire country is likely to approach that situation by the end of the 1970s, with Japan in the role of the North, unless there is a change in national policy. I can envision a grave dug by a Japanese-made power shovel, a body clad in Japanese textiles, and a hearse made by a Japanese auto-maker.[61]

This sense of economic war with Japan, moreover, has obviously influenced the Nixon Administration: in October 1970, the United States actually threatened to resolve the textile dispute by recourse to legislation in the Trading with the Enemy Act.[62]

The Nixon Administration's policy toward Japan is, however, complex, for while aligning with the anti-Japan economic bloc in the United States and according the Japanese shabby diplomatic consideration in the China issue, the Nixon Doctrine for Asia strongly emphasizes that Japan is destined to become America's primary partner in (1) the economic development, and (2) military security activities, in Asia.[63] As the statement by Secretary of State Rogers at the beginning of Section 4 indicates, official American policy remains the encouragement of continued militarization by Japan. Such rearmament, it is argued, is essential for the expanded role Japan must eventually play as a participant in "regional security" in Asia; and there exists no danger it will get out of hand. In 1953 Nixon, then Vice-President, was the first high U.S. official to publicly attack the "no war" clause in the Japanese constitution, and his position on Japanese military development remains essentially unchanged today. The Nixon Administration, like its postwar predecessors, desires a Japanese military establishment capable of action beyond Japan's borders. Even more, there have been strong indications that some members of the Nixon Administration, particularly Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, have actually encouraged Japan to develop nuclear capability.[64]

The sanguine view of Japan's postwar "pacifism" which enables Washington to regard Japanese remilitarization as low risk has proven increasingly unpersuasive both within the United States and throughout the world. The counsel for the Symington committee attempted (with little success) to pose this issue in the 1970 hearings on U.S. commitments to Japan:

> You pointed out they have a growing military budget, we noted the tremendous election victory of Prime Minister Sato, and the current decline of the Socialist Party with their views on unarmed neutrality. General McGehee pointed out that Japan has less and less of the nuclear allergy which we have known her to have over the years. They have volunteered

> for a peacekeeping role in Southeast Asia. They have a missile capability, and one commentator ventures a prediction that they will have a missile in being. They have been slower to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty than we thought, and you pointed out, Mr. Secretary [Undersecretary of State U. Alexis Johnson], this was in part due to a desire to keep open their options. There are other evidences of a reawakening nationalism in Japan. On the basis of this recitation, do we understand Japan's intended role in the Far East as well as we think we do? [65]

Blunter assessments of the situation have emanated from Congressional bodies such as the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. A "Report of Special Study Mission to Asia" issued by this committee in April 1970, for example, reached this conclusion concerning the thrust of military thinking in present-day Japan:

> There is a strong effort underway by some groups in Japan toward rearmament and a seeming return to the old "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere." The study mission was concerned with the increased emphasis by some on enlarging Japan's military prowess, even though it already supports the sixth largest military establishment in the world.
>
> While the Japanese Constitution, by limiting its forces to island defense, does provide certain basic restrictions on rearming, this constitutional provision can be circumvented by broadening the definition of Japan's defensive perimeter. In fact, obviously concerned about maintaining a steady flow of Mideast oil to Japanese industry, some in Japan now consider its area of defense reaches to where oil shipments must traverse, the Straits of Malacca.
>
> Prime Minister Sato recently sounded the call to Japan's new militarism when he said: "It is clear that the (Japanese) people are no longer satisfied with a merely negative pacifism aiming only at the country's safety."
>
> The study mission was told that Japan has decided it does not want to remain militarily dependent upon the United States. No one can dispute this aim, however far they look beyond this premise. Authoritative Japanese officials have stated that efforts be advanced to accomplish the total withdrawal of American forces from Japan (not merely Okinawa) within this decade.
>
> The Prime Minister, according to information made available to the study mission, interpreted his recent reelection as a mandate to proceed with significant military expansion.
>
> Japan has been spending 1 percent of its GNP for arms. With an annual 25 [*sic*] percent increase in the GNP, Japan's expenditures for military equipment will double every 4 years. In addition we have learned it is now recommended that 2 percent of GNP be devoted to defense spending—geometrically increasing Japan's military power. Is this not a return to the Bushido of old Japan?
>
> The study mission must also state that Japan is reported to possess an advanced nuclear capability and will soon have the delivery systems for nuclear weapons. Although Japan did recently sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty we were made to understand that ratification could be put off indefinitely.
>
> In our discussions it was indicated that Japan intends to become the great seapower once again, to "protect" its trade routes. This, too, has ominous overtones.
>
> Placing this aspect of our report in perspective, the study mission evi-

> dences concern over Japan's emphasis on the new militarism. There seems to be a readiness to commit a substantial portion of Japan's vast wealth to the reestablishment of a major international military force. This involves increased spending, a much broader definition of her area of defense, nuclear capability and a clear determination to be a military power on a scale not contemplated since World War II.
>
> . . . In still another area, we were impressed by the renewed popularity in Japan of the old line that "Korea is a daggar pointed at the heart of Japan."
>
> This is actually part of a broader effort to give the widest possible definition to Japan's perimeter for defense under the terms of its constitution. The area that Japan now seems to consider within its immediate area of defense extends from Korea through the Straits of Malacca.[66]

The specter of resurgent Japanese militarism has naturally been most alarming to the People's Republic of China. Indeed, beginning around 1969, it became clear that China's leaders had come to regard Japanese militarism as a potential threat to their security surpassed if at all only by that of the Soviet Union. This represented a profound change in the Chinese world view: for while the relationship between Japanese remilitarization and the U.S. security system was still acknowledged, Japan *by itself* was for the first time in the postwar period seen as potentially more dangerous to China than the United States. This change became generally known to the American public only several years later, primarily through the interviews which Chou En-lai gave to the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (July 1971) and James Reston (August 1971). In these interviews Chou stressed, first, that Japanese military expansion in Asia was inevitable given the "lopsided" nature of postwar Japanese economic development; and second, that concrete developments in Japan confirmed the more theoretical assumption:

> . . . And so this lopsided development of Japan, what will issue from it? She needs to carry out an economic expansion abroad. Otherwise, she cannot maintain her economy. And so, being in a capitalist system, following this economic expansion, there is bound to come with it military expansion. Isn't that so? And so, precisely because of that, the fourth defense plan is from 1972 to 1976, and they plan to spend more than $16 billion. About the total amount of military expenditures of Japan after the Second World War to 1971, the first three defense plans, was only a bit over $10 billion. And some American senators [*sic*], after visiting Japan, reported that this fourth Japanese defense plan exceeded the requirements of Japan for self-defense.
>
> And according to the present economic capacity of Japan, she does not require five years to carry out this fourth plan. As we see it, they may be able to fulfill it in only two or two-and-a-half years. And in this way, it's all further proof that the appetite, the ambitions are becoming much greater. And so they are thinking not only of having up-to-date equipment, but also thinking of manufacturing nuclear weapons themselves. Now Japan is already cooperating with the United States and Australia in building a nuclear reactor and nuclear power, and Japan is already able to manufacture guided missiles, ground-to-air and ground-to-ground guided missiles without a nuclear warhead. So the only problem remaining is how to manufacture a nuclear warhead to put on these missiles. So there does exist this danger.[67]

Chou also pointed out the interrelationship between Japanese economic growth and the Korea, Vietnam, and Indochina wars; the particularly dangerous aspects of Japanese involvement in South Korea and Taiwan; and the contradictory elements of competition/cooperation in the Nixon policy toward Japan. His remarks, however, still failed to convey a sense of the detailed and specific analysis of trends in Japan which underlies the current Chinese fear. The Chinese press has dealt with this problem at length, and apart from its distinctive vocabulary, the analysis which it has provided in fact represents a fairly comprehensive summary of the concerns voiced also by non-Chinese observers. A nine-point critique published in both *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) and *Jiefangjun Bao* (Liberation Army Daily) on September 3, 1970, aptly draws together these concerns: (1) "Several zaibatsu which used to be the behind-the-scene bosses of the Japanese fascist 'military headquarters' have already staged a come-back" (a recognition of the military-industrial complex which has been built up in Japan under the U.S.-Japan security agreements); (2) "Japanese militarism has been rearmed" (it is pointed out that the Japanese military now numbers 280,000 men, close to the force level maintained just prior to the Japanese attack on China in the 1930s; also that there is a preponderance of active officers, numerous reserve officers, and expansive military plans for the future); (3) "The militarist forces have again taken a grip on the military and political power in Japan" (notation of the dominance of prewar figures in both the Sato cabinet and officer corps); (4) "Japan's ruling clique is pushing ahead with accelerated pace the fascistization of its political system" (police expansion to beyond the prewar level, plus reactionary legislation); (5) "Japanese monopoly capital has been frenziedly carrying out expansion and aggression abroad" (statistics on Japanese economic expansion throughout Asia); (6) "Japanese militarism has openly placed our territory Taiwan Province and Korea within its sphere of influence" (quotations from the 1969 Nixon-Sato communiqué); (7) "The Japanese militarists actively serve as U.S. imperialism's 'gendarmes in Asia' and 'overseers' of slaves in a futile attempt to re-dominate Asia by taking this opportunity" (reference to military collusion with South Korea and Taiwan under the U.S.-Japan security treaty, plus counterrevolutionary alliances such as ASPAC, the Asian and Pacific Council); (8) "The Japanese militarists try hard to find excuses for sending troops abroad" ("life-line" rhetoric, talk of defending the Straits of Malacca); and (9) "The Japanese ruling circles energetically create counter-revolutionary public opinion for a war of aggression" (resurgence of military themes in the mass media, textbooks, organizations devoted to restoring the "bushido" spirit, etc.).[68]

Distrust of Japan runs deep through all of Asia, and is based on vivid recollection of the brutal realities of Japan's earlier quest for "coexistence and coprosperity." Americans easily forget that the United States suffered *least* among participants in the Pacific War—that indeed the Japanese had killed some 2 million Chinese *before* Pearl Harbor. Thus bland assurances that Japan has learned its lesson meet understandable disbelief in Asia. But more concretely, it is possibly to point to three recent official documents, all supported by the United States, which appear to give firm substance to the fear that Japan has indeed entered an entirely new level of military expansion: the Nixon-Sato communiqué of November 1969, which paved the way for the U.S.-Japan agreement on the reversion of Okinawa; and the Defense Agency White Paper and Fourth Defense Plan of Japan, issued on successive days in October 1970.

U.S. spokesmen have pointed with pride to the "new" military commitments agreed upon by the Japanese in the 1969 communiqué, namely "that Japan is interested and involved in the defense of other areas." [69] Specifically, as explained by U. Alexis Johnson: (1) "you have for the first time in an official Japanese Government statement, the recognition that the security of Japan is related to the peace and security of the Far East"; (2) you "have the specific reference to Korea, in which the flat statement is made that the security of the Republic of Korea is essential to Japan's own security"; (3) again for the first time, it is stated by the Japanese "that the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area is also a most important factor for the security of Japan"; (4) Prime Minister Sato agreed that Japan would consider participating in an international peacekeeping force in Indochina after conclusion of hostilities; (5) in connection with the projected reversion of Okinawa, Japan assumed responsibility for "a further geographic extension" of military forces by moving Japanese military personnel to that island; (6) Japan for the first time acknowledged its interest in participating in the postwar rehabilitation of Indochina (meaning primarily continued aid to anti-communist regimes).[70] In addition, in the months following the Nixon-Sato communiqué it became widely acknowledged that Japanese officials did in fact see the Straits of Malacca as part of their strategic "lifeline," within their drastically expanded "defense perimeter." [71]

The 1969 joint communiqué represented Japan's part of the bargain for the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese administrative control. This reversion was to have been Sato's crowning political achievement, but it now appears that he may in fact have made Japan even more vulnerable to embroilment in American military adventures in Asia. The United States has ostensibly given up use of Okinawa as a nuclear and CBW arsenal, but this is only a minor inconvenience. The single strongest point made by all U.S. civilian and military representatives who testified on the reversion before Congress was that this in no substantial way altered the U.S. base structure in Okinawa. And at the same time, the United States has interpreted the terms of the reversion and the 1969 communiqué as meaning "Our theoretical action with respect to our bases in Japan is enlarged." [72] The latter point, a subtle twist, derives from the American position that Sato's agreement to the new, broad definition of Japanese security in effect gives the United States greater freedom to use its bases in Japan (as in Okinawa) for action in Korea and Taiwan, since it is now officially agreed that this would represent "defense of Japan." (The Chinese describe this as the " 'Okinawanization' of Japan proper." [73]) Thus it would appear that the price Sato payed for his Okinawa plum included not only moving the Japanese military a stage closer to dispatch abroad, but also relinquishing some of the "prior consultation" leverage Japan had hitherto held concerning U.S. use of its bases in Japan. Through the Okinawa reversion trade-off, the United States thus gained both a freer hand in Japan and a helping in Northeast Asia and possibly elsewhere as well. Japan gained administrative rights over Okinawa, a new level of rearmament, a drastically enlarged military mission, and better odds of becoming militarily involved over Korea or Taiwan in the future.

The White Paper and Fourth Defense Plan, issued under the facile Yashuhiro Nakasone, then head of the Defense Agency, were aimed at creating the psychological and material militarism necessary to fill this expanded perimeter. The former, unprecedented in postwar Japan, was fundamentally directed toward the creation of a patriotic "defense consciousness" among the Japanese. Amidst consoling platitudes (civilian control, "defensive" orientation, etc.), however, critics found less reassuring lines of thought. The White Paper began by noting that, noble as the goals of the United Nations may be, "the rule of force remains." "True patriotism," it said, "demands not just love of peace and country but also eagerness to contribute on one's own initiative to the defense of the country." To maintain "national consensus" and a "sound society," the White Paper stated, "it becomes imperative that preventive efforts be kept up in the nonmilitary field at all times"—meaning police repression of domestic dissent. In a strikingly bold departure, the paper castigated the "nihilistic feelings about nuclear weapons prevailing among the people," and then stated that whereas Japan "should not" develop ICBMs or strategic bombers, "as for defensive nuclear weapons, it is considered that Japan may have them in theory, without contradicting the Constitution." The paper called for sea and air supremacy "around Japan," without defining the key phrase.[74] And, an act of omission, it was subsequently learned that a statement denying the possible future introduction of military conscription had been deleted from the final draft.[75]

The significance of the $16.9 billion Fourth Defense Plan (a five-year plan) lies not only in the fact that it was 50 percent again larger than all previous military budgets combined, but also that this major change in the scale of military expansion was introduced *after* it had become widely recognized that Japan already possessed full capability for conventional defense of its homeland. In the view of most commentators, the goal of the plan is to provide Japan with the capability of "strategic" or "forward" or "offensive" defense—that is, the capacity for "preventive war." Apologists for the plan point out that under it Japan will still be spending a smaller percentage of GNP (approximately 0.92 percent) than any other major power. The other side of this statistics game, however, is (1) the Japanese GNP is immense and expanding rapidly; (2) growth in military spending is exceeding growth in the overall economy; and (3) in per capita terms this will average out to roughly forty dollars per Japanese (China's per capita defense spending is $6.50; South Korea's $10). Much of the expenditures under the Fourth Defense Plan will go to increasing air and sea power; strength of the air force will grow 2.8 times, navy 2.3 times, and ground forces 1.9 times. Whereas the Third Defense Plan alloted $2.4 billion to expansion of equipment, the sum under the present plan will be $7 billion—an increase which critics regard as extremely significant insofar as the growth of a military-industrial complex in Japan is concerned. These sums, as is well known, flow primarily to a small number of giant concerns (notably Mitsubishi), which wield extraordinary political leverage in Japan and have long been clamoring for a rise in defense expenditures up to 4 percent of GNP. As Herbert Bix has effectively documented, most of these firms also have lock-ins with U.S. defense contractors. This is an aspect of the Nixon Doctrine which is often overlooked—the creation, in the phrase of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, of a "trans-Pacific military-industrial complex." And, in appraising the ultimate implications of the Fourth Defense Plan, the same journal concludes that "of the alternatives, invasion of Japan by a hostile force or the despatch of Japanese forces to 'friendly' or 'hostile' soil, the latter is considered the more likely." [76]

In the days before the People's Republic of China became an acceptable entity in the United States, the late Mary Wright, professor of Chinese history at Yale, counseled students lecturing on China in their communities that their major task was elemental: to show that the Chinese were people. As the Japanese superpower came under fire both internationally and within the United States, on both economic and military grounds, defenders of the U.S.-Japan alliance in effect took upon themselves a comparable task: to stress that the Japanese were good folk, and more than that, capitalist and peace-loving like ourselves. Their position was most fully presented before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in November 1971 by George Ball, Edwin Reischauer, Robert Scalapino, Henry

Rosovsky, and Hugh Patrick. Excerpts from these hearings were subsequently published by the United States–Japan Trade Council in a pamphlet appropriately entitled "United States & Japan: DANGER AHEAD."

The Japan specialists attempted to demystify Japanese intentions and dispel popular misconceptions of the "unique" dynamics of the Japanese economic miracle by hardnosed reaffirmation of the fundamental and essential compatability of Japanese and American capitalism in Asia's future ("after all," in Patrick's words, "competition is inherent in the actuality and the ideology of our private enterprise systems"). Yet over their presentations hovered the shadow of George Kennan and the ghost of John Foster Dulles. For in the end they rested their arguments on the fundamental assumption of all postwar American policy in Asia. Japan is the superdomino. Professor Reischauer, for example, provided the Dulles-dimension of apocalypse:

> At this watershed in history, we could be witnessing the start of a flow in world events which could in time gain irreversible force and sweep us all to ultimate catastrophe.

George Ball, in turn, evoked George Kennan, chapters 1948 and 1949, in dismissing China and citing the pivotal importance to the United States of alliance with the industrial and military power of Japan:

> Today the United States is watching with fascination the emergence of China onto the world stage. . . . From the vantage point of the United States, there is only one large industrialized power in the Far East and that is Japan. China, by comparison, is an industrial primitive, whose GNP is not much more than a third of Japan's, in spite of an eight to one advantage in population.
>
> We must, of necessity, build our policy primarily on close relations with the most powerful country in the area: Japan. To do this will require skill and attention and a great deal more sensitivity than we have shown in recent months. . . . Japan plays two major roles of vital interest to the United States. First, it has the potential to become the most powerful political and military nation in the East Asian and Pacific region and thus is likely to become the dominant power in the area. Second, it is today the third greatest industrial power in the world and may, in time, overtake the Soviet Union which is now the second greatest.

Ball and Scalapino also implictly reaffirmed the traditional bipolar approach to American commitments in Asia. Thus Ball saw American relations with China and Japan as essentially an either/or proposition: "Under no circumstances could we envisage a relationship to China that would serve in any sense as an alternative to close Japanese-American cooperation." And Scalapino, a good realist from the early days of the Vietnam war, derided the thought of abandoning confrontation:

> . . . the belief that in Asia, we can now substitute some kind of loose, yet equal quadrilateral relation among the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan and the People's Republic of China for the American-Japanese alliance is a form of romanticism that accords neither with the economic nor the political-military realities of this era.

Scalapino also coupled skepticism of multipolar relations in Asia with evocation of another familiar apprehension: the threat of upheaval within Japan itself. "For the first time since 1949," he argued, "political instability in Japan is a distinct possibility."

Insofar as Japanese militarism is concerned, the basic argument of the present defenders of the alliance is simple, and somewhat ironic. Whereas the original rationale of the security relationship had been that the U.S. base structure would protect Japan until Japan had remilitarized to the point of being capable of its own conventional defense, the current argument now holds that the United States must maintain its bases and forces in Japan and Okinawa indefinitely to *prevent* massive Japanese remilitarization. Thus Ball argued that, "To my mind there is nothing more important for the peace of the whole Pacific area than that the treaty [Mutual Security Treaty with Japan] be rigorously observed and that the United States do nothing to encourage Japanese militarization." Reischauer defended a similar position in these terms:

> On the defense side, if the Japanese lose confidence in us or believe that we will not treat them as real equals, a fairly rapid decline in the effectiveness of our Mutual Security Treaty with them will follow. Without the use of Japanese bases and tacit Japanese support, we could not reasonably maintain the Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific or our commitment to South Korea, and would probably be forced to withdraw to mid-Pacific . . . the Japanese might drift back toward major military power, instability might increase in Asia, and inter-regional anxieties might reappear. The political and economic roads would then merge as they led downward toward a great world tragedy.

James Reston posed this same question to Chou En-lai. "If we end the security pact with Japan," he asked, "is it in your view that it is more likely then that Japan will become more militaristic or less militaristic?" "That argument," Chou replied, "is quite a forced argument," for Japan is already rapidly remilitarizing under the security treaty.[77]

And of course it is, for that is the U.S. policy.

The Chinese press answered the question with a question in turn: "Can it be that there is no revival of militarism until a war of aggression is launched one morning?" [78]

Time will tell.

Notes

1. The major references to Japan which appear in the Senator Gravel edition are as follows: *Vol. I,* 39, 82, 84, 155, 187, 364, 366, 375, 386–387, 418–420, 425, 436, 438, 450, 452, 469–470, 475, 511, 513, 589, 594, 597, 598, 600, 626–627. *Vol. II,* 57, 459, 664, 799, 817, 822. *Vol. III,* 3, 51, 87, 153, 219, 497, 500, 503, 598, 623, 627, 637, 638, 658, 685, 723. *Vol. IV,* 54, 89, 91, 103, 108, 156, 174, 529, 614–615, 618–619, 663, 669, 672, 683, 684. Henceforth this source will be cited as Gravel edition.

2. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs (1925–1950)* (1967: Boston, Little, Brown), Ch. XVI.

3. U.S. Government edition, 239, 254, 255, 257.

4. USG ed., 262.

5. Gravel ed., I:415; I:83–84. Cf. Roger Hilsman on the Chinese menace in 1963:

"In Asia the greatest danger to independent nations comes from Communist China, with its 700 million people forced into the service of an aggressive Communist Party" (*Ibid.*, II: 822).

6. USG ed., 258.

7. *Ibid.*, 260–261.

8. *Ibid.*, 262–264. SCAP [Supreme Commander, Allied Powers] refers to General Douglas MacArthur, who had command over the occupation of Japan.

9. *Ibid.*, 434.

10. *Department of State Bulletin*, January 21, 1952. Cf. William Sebald, *With MacArthur in Japan: A Personal History of the Occupation* (1965: New York, W. W. Norton), 284 ff; and Herbert Morrison, *Herbert Morrison, An Autobiography* (1960: London, Odhams Press), 280. See also the authoritative history of the Yoshida cabinets, Iwao Takeuchi, ed., *Yoshida Naikaku* (1954: Tokyo, Yoshida Naikaku Kankokai), 451 ff.

11. Gunnar Adler-Karlson, *Western Economic Warfare 1947–1967: A Case Study in Foreign Economic Policy,* Acta Universitatis Stockhomienses, Stockholm Economic Studies, New Series IX (1968: Stockholm), 208. See Ch. 16 of this study on CHINCOM.

12. The details of these transactions demand detailed and integrated study, but this is not the type of research presently encouraged in U.S. scholarly circles. Fascinating but uncoordinated information can be found in Chitoshi Yanaga, *Big Business in Japanese Politics* (1968: New Haven, Yale). One early abortive plan in creating the Japan–Southeast Asia link involved U.S. endeavors to move Japanese economic interests into Southeast Asia by using Kuomintang contacts in Taiwan to establish an entree into Southeast Asia through the overseas Chinese there—a pagodalike form of neo-colonialism indeed. See *Yoshida Naikaku,* 495–578, for a useful summary in Japanese of the endeavors to create a U.S.–Japan–Southeast Asia nexus in the 1951–1954 period.

13. Joseph M. Dodge Papers, cited in Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power* (1972: New York, Harper and Row), 533.

14. United Kingdom, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, *Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict, 1945–1965*, 66–67; cited in Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* (1969: Boston, Beacon), 105.

15. On the anticipation that Japan will gradually assume functions such as those now performed by the United States under the Military Assistance Program (MAP), including training of foreign military personnel, see the testimony of U. Alexis Johnson in *United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad: Japan and Okinawa,* Hearings before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-first Congress, Second Session (Part 5), January 26–29, 1970, 1222. Hereafter cited as *United States Security Agreements.*

16. *Ibid.,* 1225.

17. USG ed., p. 261; Cf. the May 1951 NSC document quoted in Section 3; also Gravel ed., I:98.

18. *United States Security Agreements,* 1165–1166.

19. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Feb. 13, 1971. Fujiyama in recent years has emerged as the leader of a group of conservative Japanese politicians who, even prior to the U.S. gestures toward China, advocated revision of the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party's China policy. Following his trip to China he was actually stripped of his party offices by the disciplinary committee of the party.

20. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power,* 510, 525. For representative American views of the Occupation see Edwin O. Reischauer, *The United States and Japan* rev. ed. (1957: Cambridge, Harvard); also Robert E. Ward, "Reflections on the Allied Occupation and Planned Political Change in Japan," in Robert E. Ward, ed., *Political Development in Modern Japan* (1968: Princeton). In Japanese, extensive documentation on the occupation period and its aftermath can be found in the indispensable "official" history of the Yoshida cabinets, *Yoshida naikaku,* and the valuable six-volume documentary collection *Shiryō: Sengo nijunen shi* (Documents: A History of the First Twenty Years of the Postwar Period) published in 1966–67 by Nihon

Hyoronsha. The introductory chapter by Shigeki Toyama in volume 6 of the latter work is a useful chronological account of the 1945–1965 period, with sharp focus on the continuing unfolding of the reverse course. Seizaburo Shinobu's four-volume *Sengo Nihon seijishi* (Political History of Postwar Japan), published in 1965–67 by Keiso Shobo, is actually a detailed narrative account of the 1945–1952 period.

21. I have dealt with aspects of the reverse course in occupied Japan prior to the Korean War in two previous articles: "The Eye of the Beholder: Background Notes on the U.S.-Japan Military Relationship," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* II, 1 (October 1969); and "Occupied Japan and the American Lake, 1945–1950," in Edward Friedman and Mark Selden, eds., *America's Asia: Dissenting Essays in U.S.-Asian Relations* (1971: New York, Pantheon). These articles provide a fuller biography on this subject than can be listed here.

22. Cf. George Kennan, *Memoirs,* 414–418, 525.

23. USG ed., 239–242.

24. USG ed., 434–435.

25. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power,* 533.

26. For a gullible but fascinating biography of Kishi in English see Dan Kurzman, *Kishi and Japan: The Search for the Sun* (1960: New York, Ivan Obolensky, Inc.). A useful and neglected English source on reverse-course trends in Japan up to 1960 is Ivan Morris, *Nationalism and the Right Wing in Japan: A Study of Postwar Trends* (1960: Oxford). Other useful sources on postwar trends within Japanese conservative ranks are Haruhiro Fukui, *Party in Power: The Japanese Liberal-Democrats and Policy-making* (1970: University of California); Eleanor M. Hadley, *Antitrust in Japan* (1970: Princeton); and Kozo Yamamura, *Economic Policy in Postwar Japan: Growth versus Economic Democracy* (1967: University of California).

27. *Okinawa Reversion Treaty,* Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-second Congress, October 27, 28, and 29, 1971, 14.

28. *United States Security Agreements,* 1167, 1205.

29. Kennan, *Memoirs,* 415. Even the role of the USSR in the events leading to the outbreak of the Korean War itself remains obscure.

30. *United States Security Agreements,* 1418. Cf. 1207–1209, 1306–1307.

31. See the testimony of U.S. China experts in *United States–China Relations: A Strategy for the Future,* Hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-first Congress, Second Session, September 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 29, and October 6, 1970.

32. Washington *Post,* November 30, 1969. For various statistics see *United States Security Agreements,* especially 1214, 1237, 1248, 1294; *Okinawa Reversion Treaty,* 57; and Congressional Quarterly, Inc., *Global Defense: U.S. Military Commitments Abroad* (Sept. 1969).

33. Cf. *Okinawa Reversion Treaty,* 64.

34. Washington *Post,* November 30, 1969. *United States Security Agreements,* 1214. Japan does play an indirect role in the nuclear deterrence by servicing the Seventh Fleet, the SAC force, etc. The issue of exclusion of nuclear weapons from Japan and Okinawa is controversial in that some critics believe that, particularly with regard to postreversion Okinawa, the U.S. simply does not intend to honor its pledge. In one of the more dramatic scenarios of the Pentagon Papers, two contingency plans which "provide for either non-nuclear or nuclear options against China (OPLAN 32–64 and OPLAN 39–65) do involve use of U.S. bases in Japan, though in precisely what capacity is not clear. Gravel ed., III:636–639.

35. *United States Security Agreements,* 1166, 1243, 1415.

36. See, for example, Morton Halperin's testimony in *United States–China Relations.*

37. *United States Security Agreements,* 1162.

38. The plan was prepared in 1963 and made public in the Diet in February 1965 by a representative of the Socialist party in connection with the Japan-ROK normalization controversy. It has received inadequate attention in the United States. See Tsukasa Matsueda and George E. Moore, "Japan's Shifting Attitudes toward the Military: *Mitsuya Kenkyu* and the Self-Defense Force, *Asian Survey,* VII, 9 (Sept. 1969).

39. *United States Security Agreements,* 1183, 1214.

40. Ronald Dore, "Japan As a Model of Economic Development, *Archives Européennes de Sociologie,* V, 1 (1964), 147–148, 153.

41. G. C. Allen, *A Short Economic History of Modern Japan, 1867–1937, With a Supplementary Chapter on Economic Recovery and Expansion, 1945–1960.* (1962: New York, Praeger), 214. Special Procurements are defined by Allen as "Allied military expenditure in dollars and pounds, yen purchases for Joint Defense Account, expenditure of Allied soldiers and civilian officials in Japan, and payments in respect of certain offshore procurement contracts." The U.S. role in the "Allied" expenditures is, however, overwhelming.

42. Congressional Quarterly, Inc., *Global Defense,* 40. Cf. *United States Security Agreements,* 1205.

43. *United States Security Agreements,* 1206, 1231, 1296.

44. Cf. *Far Eastern Economic Review,* September 28, 1967, April 4 and 11, 1968.

45. Yanaga, *Big Business in Japanese Politics,* esp. 251–272.

46. Yanaga, *Big Business,* provides interesting insight into this.

47. Bundy had visited Japan the previous month. Cf., however, Gravel ed., III:685.

48. *United States Security Agreements,* 1194.

49. Rusk was in fact being ingenuous about the reason the United States entered into the security treaty with Australia and New Zealand (ANZUS). As noted previously here in the text, the two countries demanded the treaty of Dulles as a guarantee of their security against *Japan* and a precondition to their acquiescence in the independence-cum-remilitarization peace settlement which Dulles was at that time setting up for Japan.

50. USG ed., 435.

51. *United States Foreign Policy, Asia Studies Prepared at the Request of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, by Conlon Associates, Ltd.* 86th Congress, 1st Session (November 1, 1959), 85–109. The report also gives a prognosis of future U.S. military "disengagement" from Japan and Japan's maintenance of its own "forward" defense, and stresses that Japan's future will be dependent upon maintenance of the status quo in Asia.

52. I have dealt with this general problem at some length in my doctoral dissertation, "Yoshida Shigeru and the Great Empire of Japan, 1878–1945," Harvard University, 1972.

53. The Pentagon Papers indirectly raise an interesting question as to the extent to which the United States took Japan into its confidence insofar as U.S. policy regarding the Vietnam war is concerned. This emerges most notably in those sections of the Papers which deal with the crucial period in late 1964 when the United States was planning to escalate the war, for in virtually every document relating to this decision, wherever the problem of prior coordination with "key allies" concerning this escalation is concerned, Japan is conspicuously absent from the listings of those key allies. Cf. Gravel ed., III:257, 290, 308, 593, 611, 613, 650, 658–659, 664, 677, 681, 717.

54. *United States Security Agreements,* 1197.

55. The favorite epithets tacked on Japan by the Chinese have been the "gendarme in Asia," the "running dog," and the "fugle-man" of U.S. imperialism.

56. *United States Security Agreements,* 1259.

57. The "trade war" fear pervades virtually all U.S. articles on Japanese economic expansion which have appeared in both popular and specialized American journals during the past several years. The danger of provoking Japan to the extent that it may endeavor to break with the United States and establish an independent "third" bloc in Asia, rivaling the United States and Western Europe, has been particularly strongly emphasized by Edwin Reischauer. Cf. his November 1971 testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, as abstracted in United States–Japan Trade Council, *United States and Japan: Danger Ahead,* p. 4.

58. USG ed., 1949, 227; cited also in Gravel ed., I:82.

59. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "Listing of Recent U.S. Criticisms Against Japan," August 1971. Mimeographed. I am grateful to Jon Sherwood for providing me with a copy of this, as well as certain other materials used in this essay.

60. *Ibid.* A brief section of the document also listed "Criticisms concerning Political

Matters," under which three general categories were noted: (1) inadequacy of Japan's efforts in the field of defense; (2) dissatisfaction concerning the return of Okinawa; and (3) criticism concerning the Japanese attitude toward American foreign policy. But the overwhelming focus of the document is on economic matters.

61. *Congressional Record,* November 29, 1971, p. E 12671. Thurmond's influential position in American *domestic* politics, namely the "Southern strategy" on which Nixon came to power, would seem to be of central importance in interpreting what otherwise appears to be the needless offensiveness of the "Nixon shocks" to which Japan has recently been subjected. For the Southern bloc which figures so strongly in Republican national politics is also the "textile bloc" which harbors most blatant anti-Japanese resentments.

62. United States–Japan Trade Council, *op. cit.,* 9.

63. The Chinese constantly emphasize this "contradiction." See, for example, Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, *China! Inside the People's Republic* (1972: Bantam), 355; also The New York Times, *Report from Red China* (1972: Avon), 99.

64. This controversial issue arose during Laird's visit to Japan in July 1971 and received wide press coverage. The Senate Republican Policy Committee attempted to discredit the rumor that the Nixon Administration was encouraging Japanese acquisition of nuclear weapons in its *Republican Report* of July 29, 1971. The issue was revived in January 1972; cf. Washington *Post,* January 16, 1972.

65. *United States Security Agreements,* 1218.

66. The report was authored by Representatives Lester L. Wolff of New York and J. Herbert Burke of Florida and issued by the House Committee of Foreign Relations on April 22, 1970. On Japan's economic goals, the mission observed that "The general impression of the Japanese economy was of a healthy animal seeking, on one hand, to protect itself from other healthy animals and, on the other hand, using its strength to secure some measure of obedience from weaker animals."

67. Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, *China!,* 358. Cf. The New York Times, *Report from Red China,* 62, 64–66, 69, 72–73, 84, 91ff.

68. The article is reprinted along with seven other pieces in *Down with Revived Japanese Militarism* (1971: Peking, Foreign Languages Press).

69. *United States Security Agreements,* 1445.

70. *Ibid.,* 1439ff.

71. In addition to the "Report of Special Study Mission to Asia" quoted in the text, see Robert Scalapino's testimony of September 1970 in *United States–China Relations,* 193.

72. *United States Security Agreements,* 1184–1186.

73. *Down with Revived Japanese Militarism,* 33.

74. The quotations are from an abstract of the White Paper published in the *Japan Times,* October 21, 1970.

75. *Down with Revived Japanese Militarism,* 16.

76. *Far Eastern Economic Review,* November 7, 1970, and May 15, 1971. Herbert Bix, "The Security Treaty and the Japanese Military Industrial Complex," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* II, 2 (January 1970).

77. The New York Times, *Report from Red China,* 93–94.

78. *Down with Revived Japanese Militarism,* 7.

9. The Last Line of Defense

by Nina S. Adams

The Pentagon study is very much like the American operation it tries to describe—an enormous, overpowering, resourceful and misdirected effort which could crush by its sheer weight if it failed to convince by its arguments. Diligently rather than perceptively compiled, the Defense Department History of U.S. Decisionmaking on Vietnam is not a sudden revelation of truth, not a history of the war and certainly not a history of Vietnam although it has been mistaken for a composite of all three. The study's significance lies in its initial impact on the public and in the future use of its documents by historians; it is least valuable for the historical analysis it purports to contain. The summary sections pull the reader into a maze of indigestible detail shot through with precisely those simplistic generalizations which should be challenged by both scholars and activists.

The raw materials, the choice of authors, the intended Pentagon audience and the methods of research for the study determined its hypotheses, categories and conclusions. Confined to the available documents and guided by their own political inclinations, the authors reflect more than they question the assumptions and biases of earlier decisionmakers. Not surprisingly, the authors adopted the peculiar Pentagon device of seeking truth by choosing the middle ground among absurd or badly formulated "options." As loyalists writing a work for policymakers to read, the authors omitted the topics and questions which should form the core of a historical treatment of American interference in Asia. The study fails as history for it makes no attempt to deal with the Vietnamese reality and isolates Vietnam policy entirely from other American foreign policies and from American history. The result is a tedious chronicle which makes little sense. Just like successive American administrations, the Pentagon authors pay no attention to the character of the Indochinese resistance organizations whose blending of political and military concerns into revolutionary warfare has been the key to their success against superior forces since 1945. Rejecting any notion of the United States as a power with systemic and agency interests, the authors passively accept the conventional rhetoric which conceals rather than exposes the roots of American foreign policy.

The Pentagon team was not commissioned to explore the past objectively but to answer the question "What went wrong?" The study's message, "Do it differently," has been heeded by the Nixon administration, which ignored the study itself. We are now in the Third Indochina War, characterized by reliance on mercenaries, computerized warfare, massive bombing, greater secrecy and intensified destruction. The new warfare, aimed at total destruction of revolutionary movements by complete elimination of population, differs from earlier combat in methods, not in aims. It can be carried on without loss of American life or the damaging publicity that hampered earlier operations. The Nixon administration escalated at the same time and in part because the conviction was spreading that

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the war was winding down. The information and analyses needed to understand the new face of war have already appeared; we don't have to wait for the declassification of documents in order to knowledgably oppose what is happening now.

The Pentagon materials which have been released to the public are useful for showing the depth of self- and public deception of which the government is capable. But a careful reading of the entire work will yield little information that was not published before nor will it offer any protection for the public from future lies that cover up aggression in Asia and elsewhere. The critiques in the study stick closely to instrumental matters such as non-coordination among departments or the failure to analyze intelligence reports and dissect policy proposals. The chronologies, maps and outlines of major agreements which the study offers or reproduces from unclassified sources are themselves too incomplete or biased to be used even in settling cocktail-party arguments. On its own the effort is significantly incomplete, for the writers were not able to use White House records and had only limited access to State Department materials. The authors neither interviewed key individuals nor examined their records. Scholarly and journalistic accounts of events in the United States and in Indochina were rarely and selectively consulted; the implications and substance of critics' accounts were completely overlooked.

The Pentagon Papers can be of value to three groups, as much for what they omit as for what they reveal. Diplomatic historians and Washington-watchers who scrutinize the mechanisms which operate in the closed world and uptighter minds of "security managers" will find the documents useful to validate or inspire more rigorous examinations of the past. The naïve scholars who dream that a literate elite will accept their sophisticated advice on how to deal with a complex world will get, hopefully, a beneficial shock at the crudity of thought which the documents reveal. The antiwar movement will find respectable and irrefutable backing for all that it has been saying for the past eight years. Among these revelations are details of covert operations, anti-Chinese fanaticism and examples of brinksmanship which very few critics have dared to allege.

But the most important question to ask is, what use are the papers to the citizen whose tax dollars supported both the writing of the study and the war itself? Frankly, no one without unlimited leisure, a scholarly background and enormous patience will get much from the study, and it has little that could not be found elsewhere in infinitely more readable form.* Skimming even a portion of the work will reveal to Americans what the Indochinese, judging by actions rather than words, have known all along.

Successive administrations lied to the American public about everything from weaponry to negotiations, POWs to potential bloodbaths, escalation to Vietnamization and back again. Other essays in Volume V of the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers deal with these and related issues. The Pentagon study does, however, succeed in emphasizing for those who have forgotten or who never knew John Foster Dulles or the old Nixon, how dangerously rigid the crusaders are, how much they rely on military operations and how broadly they define "national security."

In looking at the study as a historical account, one is struck by the extent to which it is a political work in which a few isolatable assumptions have simplified the issues and created gaps in both history and analysis. The Pentagon authors assume that their readers share the same anti-Communist view that pervades the documents and thus will accept their simple retrospective rationalizations. But communism and conspiracy alone cannot explain why the United States is so involved in Asia or why the United States cannot prevail in Indochina. Fervent anticommunism is not a strong enough alibi for the American persistence in finding reasons to pursue the battle for a "free" Vietnam.

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* Instead of extensive footnotes and bibliography, I have appended to this article a topical list of books on Indochina, the war, and the issues I have tried to raise.

Not surprisingly, a spinoff from publication of the study has been a series of articles by former government loyalists debating whether the Vietnam involvement was generated by presidential optimism or pessimism. This limited argument on defining a "quagmire" fits neatly into the Pentagon study's circumscribed framework of discussion. The result is that secondary issues, such as the accuracy of intelligence estimates, can be aired endlessly; no man or institution is touched by guilt for war crimes; and the main issues are again overlooked by the public, which quite sensibly ignores the debate.

The documents and the Pentagon authors take for granted several assumptions which are worth noting. First they repeat that the United States was "unexpectedly pressed into world leadership" after World War II and that the United States continues, unselfishly, to shoulder that responsibility today. The study contends that the United States had difficulty in amassing the knowledge and sophistication needed to deal with individual problems such as the Vietnamese revolution. Furthermore, the authors believe that due to American naïveté and the focus on European affairs, American policies were so ambivalent that the United States remained basically uninvolved in most of Asia's postwar conflicts. The Pentagon authors are most anxious to prove that once the United States began to involve itself in Asian affairs, its goals were altruistic and commendable, but it often chose the wrong methods, relying too heavily on military rather than political tools. Even so, the Pentagon writers feel that American aid and counterinsurgency programs, particularly those of the 1950s, would have been successful except for the stubbornness of first the French and later Ngo Dinh Diem, both of whom took advantage of American generosity, bureaucratic confusion and blind anti-Communist reflexes.

In summarizing the sad history of Vietnam in the late 1940s, the Pentagon authors offer a set of hindsight questions that reveal both their biases and their limits as historical analysts.

> For example, the U.S. could have asked itself—"Did we really have to support France in Southeast Asia in order to support a noncommunist France internally and in Europe?" Another question we could have asked ourselves was—"If the U.S. choice in Vietnam really came down to either French colonialism or Ho Chi Minh, should Ho automatically be excluded?" Again, "If the U.S. choice was to be France, did France have any real chance of succeeding, and if so, at what cost?" (Gravel edition, I:51).

Apart from the major unasked question, "Why couldn't the Pentagon authors see the many other questions which should be asked?" the questions themselves make sense only in the fantasy world created by the study. In that world, the United States, unlike other powers, had no systemic interests, no desire to expand its power, no domestic or foreign restraints on its thinking or its options. The Pentagon authors, dealing solely with specific memoranda rather than contemporary American conceptions of the world, see no link between the foreign-policy decisions they regret and the factors which determined them from 1940 to 1968. American opposition to communism in Europe is neither explained nor placed in its historical setting. While the study deals at length with President Roosevelt's vague ideas about the future of the French colonies, it ignores, among many other things, the American wartime decision to oppose communism in Europe by supporting the Sicilian and Corsican Mafias against anti-German resistance groups in Italy and France. In recounting what some high-level decisionmakers were pontificating rather than what lower-level officials were doing, the study retains the same level of ignorance as the worst of the documents.

Hoping to prove the case for American "ambivalence" the study ignores contemporary accounts, Office of Strategic Services evaluations and historians' treatments of the complex and explosive Indochinese situation after World War II. Since the writers pay little attention to either the French or the Vietnamese postures from 1945 to 1950, the reader has no way of judging the realism of American decisions to permit the British to reoccupy Saigon for the French, to ignore appeals for recognition from the Ho Chi Minh government, or to offer France the aid which freed her to begin colonial reconquest. The study seems to reaffirm the correctness of these decisions by summarizing events incompletely from a more sophisticated but still unmistakably anti-Communist point of view. Thus the authors submit their study of "Ho Chi Minh: Asian Tito?" and regretfully conclude that he never would have panned out in that role. Unlike most histories of the period, the Pentagon study contends that American actions and refusals to take action did not influence events in Asia; in fact they did, although America was indeed far from preoccupied with the region. For the Pentagon authors, America was "neutral" because in Indochina "it regarded the war as fundamentally a matter for French resolution" (Gravel ed., I:28). To most observers, this was a pro-French stand.

Examining the Vietnamese situation from 1950 (when the study mistakenly assumes American involvement to have begun) to 1954, the Pentagon authors distort the history of the period and focus their attention again on American assumptions of omnipotence and international guardianship.

> It has been argued that even as the U.S. began supporting the French in Indochina, the U.S. missed opportunities *to bring peace, stability and independence to Vietnam.* The issues arise [*sic*] from the belief on the part of some critics that (a) the U.S. made no attempt to seek out and support a democratic-nationalist alternative in Vietnam; and (b) the U.S. commanded, but did not use, leverage to move the French toward granting genuine Vietnamese independence (Gravel ed., I:53. Emphasis added).

At no time did the United States have the power or the knowledge to force any solution which the Vietnamese found unacceptable. The Pentagon fantasy embodied in this passage is significant for the implicit racism which then and later characterized American decisionmaking on Vietnam; neither the documents nor the study can accept that the Vietnamese themselves, or for that matter the French themselves, could know, judge, and act intelligently to preserve their interests. Having used none of the available histories of the French colonial war, the Vietnamese armed struggle or the background to either, the Pentagon authors simplify the issues down to supposed American failures to force accommodation to our guidance and ideas. In the retrospective Pentagon study, the defeat of American allies—who, through an inexplicable lack of vision insisted on doing much of their own planning—was no surprise except insofar as the Americans had been hoodwinked into accepting falsely optimistic reports of forthcoming victories.

The problems raised by the Pentagon study's narrow focus can be seen again in the analysis of "the policy context" in 1950.

> Events in China of 1948 and 1949 brought the United States to a new awareness of the vigor of communism in Asia, and to a sense of urgency over its containment. U.S. policy instruments developed to meet unequivocal communist challenges in Europe were applied to the problem of the Far East. Concurrent with the development of NATO, a U.S. search began for collective security in Asia; economic and military assistance programs were inaugurated; and the Truman Doctrine acquired wholly new dimensions by extension into regions where the European empires were being dismantled (Gravel ed., I:34–35).

It is true that the victory of Mao Tse-tung's revolutionary forces in the final Chinese civil war of 1945 to 1949 showed the strength of an armed Communist movement in Asia. But certainly the U.S. State Department, with excellent reports at its disposal, knew that Chiang Kai-shek's government had lost because of its own corruption, inefficiency and brutality. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, for example, explained at a press conference on January 20, 1950, "What has happened is . . . that the patience of the Chinese people in their misery has ended. They did not bother to overthrow this government. There was simply nothing to overthrow. They simply ignored it throughout the country."

There exist innumerable excellent discussions of the period by eyewitnesses, those who studied the official U.S. documents, and by the State Department itself, which issued *The China White Paper* of 1950 analyzing carefully why U.S. support could not have saved Chiang's regime. All of these accounts have been ignored by the Pentagon authors, who seem totally unaware of the American experience in China and how it might have been weighed against the later intervention in Vietnam.

While the study implies that the United States had stayed aloof from the Chinese conflict, almost as "neutral" as in Vietnam in the same years, American support prolonged Chiang's hopeless effort to redeem his politically bankrupt regime. Reports from Americans, including military observers, that the Chinese Communists, like the Viet Minh, were honest, popular and effective leaders, were disregarded. More than sheeplike anticommunism was operating here. American interest in China had never been one of benevolence alone. In 1945 the Americans were still hoping for internal reforms promoting liberal capitalism which would sustain a state where American business could profit and expand. In China in the 1940s as in Vietnam in the 1950s the United States chose to bolster a client leadership which compromised its nationalism by allowing American access; the alternative, never seriously considered, was to risk dealing with a revolutionary force which would soon reject American businessmen, missionaries and political advisers.

The Pentagon study fails most strikingly to deal with the facts and dynamics of American history. The United States did not begin a search for collective security in Asia in 1948; the Open Door and tutelage of China in uneasy alliance with Japan had been American policies since the end of the nineteenth century. The Truman Doctrine was expanding naturally as opportunities opened in previously restricted colonial areas. Compared to the other nations involved, the United States emerged from the Second World War untouched and even strengthened, knowing itself to be the strongest power in the world. The American military, having allied with private industry, scientists and scholars, resisted being dismantled and instead found threats to justify its continued expansion at home and abroad. The Pentagon's greatest achievement was in public relations, for it convinced a largely willing Congress that a war machine could be purely defensive and subject to control. The self-interest of military and civilian groups seeking to maximize influence and profits was covered by an ideological gloss of defensive anticommunism.

Although the study sees the Korean War as the major turning point in American Far Eastern policy, it can be argued that American actions in Asia follow a consistent line from the early 1800s through the 1970s. The United States was always concerned with the free movement of American capital overseas, the sustenance of the domestic economy by making profits abroad, and the expansion of markets. Government acquiescence to and support of these goals, if necessary by military force, was confirmed again as policy but dubbed with a new title after 1945. National Security Council memorandum 68 (not included in any edition of the Pentagon study), which was approved in April 1950 by President Truman *before* the outbreak of the Korean War, "envisioned quadrupling the Defense budget to an unprecedented peacetime figure of 10% of the Gross National Product or about $50 billion." [1]

Colonialism had become costly and obsolete because of the changes which had been climaxed by the Second World War. The American method was that of indirect political and economic manipulation. The meaning and uses of tools like the Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund and the CIA were concealed behind a screen of rhetoric which worked quite well in the United States; it never deceived those opposing the recolonization of their countries.

With the United States embarked on this international course, all threats to American access if not hegemony became "Communist subversion," and America's original pragmatic interests disappeared into a crusade so overladen with emotionalism that far too many people, including the policymakers, forgot where it all had started. In reading the documents, one finds only scattered references to America's fundamental interests in Southeast Asia. But one does find sufficient acknowledgment that the United States, rather than taking a belatedly defensive stand against communism in Indochina, was thinking in terms of the global economy and the need to protect economic interests. In reading the study based on the documents, it is clear that the Pentagon authors accept both the notion of American "rights" and the legitimacy of the rhetoric which extends them.

Occasionally one has to unravel American projections and read backwards from statements of the motives they attribute to the Russians, Chinese and nationalist movements. For example, the National Security Council study completed in the fall of 1949 asserted that while almost no Southeast Asian nation "is fit to govern itself," most would soon do so. The resulting problem of "instability" would have to be solved "on a non-imperialist plane." The memorandum continued:

> In any event, colonial-nationalist conflict provides a fertile field for subversive communist activities, and it is now clear that southeast Asia is the target of a coordinated offensive directed by the Kremlin. In seeking to gain control of southeast Asia, the Kremlin is motivated in part by a desire to acquire southeast Asia's resources and communications lines, and to deny them to us (Gravel ed., I:37).

Having accepted that America had certain "rights" in the world, signs of opposition were taken as offensive threats stemming from a conspiratorial base. It then became easy for the United States to plan "forward deployment containment" while honestly viewing it as a solely defensive measure having little to do with the original decision to expand. Only once having postulated the need for an American empire in the Pacific Basin could the Joint Chiefs of Staff define the situation in April 1950 as follows:

> 1. In light of U.S. strategic concepts, the integrity of the offshore island chain from Japan to Indochina is of critical strategic importance to the United States.
> 2. The mainland states of Southeast Asia also are at present of critical strategic importance to the United States because:
>   *a.* They are the major sources of certain strategic materials required for the completion of United States stock pile projects.
>   *b.* The area is a crossroad of communications (Gravel ed., I:364).

The National Security Council staff study dated February 13, 1952, went into greater detail about Southeast Asia's role as the principal supplier of rubber, tin and petroleum for the United States and Europe. Strategically, and of course thinking only in purely defensive terms,

> Communist domination of mainland Southeast Asia would place unfriendly forces astride the most direct and best-developed sea and air routes between the Western Pacific and India and the Near East. . . . Besides disrupting established lines of communication in the area, the denial of actual military facilities in mainland Southeast Asia . . . would compel the utilization of less desirable peripheral bases (Gravel ed., I:376).

I am not attempting to argue simplistically that an American hunger for raw materials or air routes led the United States to underwrite 80 percent of the costs of the Vietnam war after 1950. Like the Pentagon authors, I note in most of the pre–1950 documents included in the study very little direct mention of Vietnam. But what I find, and the Pentagon authors choose to misunderstand, is the expansionist tone and international focus, the drive to contain communism but for reasons which go beyond simple ideological fervor.

So little have the Pentagon authors studied Indochina that they even accept the totally false statement of General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny in 1951, who asserted that the French were no longer making profits in Vietnam and that they had no interests to safeguard there except Western civilization, which was under attack by communism (Gravel ed., I:67). De Lattre spoke at a time when both the French and the Americans had a strong economic stake in Indochina; both continued to make money, for example, from the Cochin-Chinese plantations into which the Viet Minh did not seriously penetrate until very late 1953. Although the war cost the French and American taxpayers ten times the value of French investments in Indochina, the private interests which had made most of the investments kept reaping profits right to the bitter end. Many French *colons*, banks, and backers in metropolitan France made their fortunes from the piaster exchange racket and from loopholes in aid arrangements.

As for the Americans, they soon began to take over the predominant economic role from the French, who kept a close and unfriendly eye on American information-gathering, investment, and use of the aid program (60 percent of whose funds were devoted to importing commodities to generate counterpart funds). Imports into Indochina from the United States went from 2 million piasters in 1936 to

298 million piasters in 1948. In that year the United States supplied 42 percent of the imports coming into the Far East. American investment in Indochina shot up from $8,854,000 in 1946 to $13,550,000 in 1950.[2] The United States did not see a specific economic stake in Indochina and thus move in to support the French. But by a happy coincidence that has been noted in every other similar situation, the decision to resist communism brought other benefits in its wake.

Neither the documents nor the commentary deal with the attitudes and organization of the allied French or opposing Viet Minh, both of whom noted and feared the gradual insinuation of America into Vietnam. The Pentagon study, which postulates and accepts anticommunism as an impetus for action, does not include any later reassessment of the 1948 State Department analysis which found "evidence of Kremlin-directed conspiracy . . . in virtually all countries except Vietnam. . . ." The State Department then evaluated the situation in a way whose defiance of common sense I leave to others to explain.

> *Evaluation.* If there is a Moscow-directed conspiracy in Southeast Asia, Indochina is an anomaly so far. Possible explanations are:
> 1. No rigid directives have been issued by Moscow.
> 2. The Vietnam government considers that it has no rightist elements that must be purged.
> 3. The Vietnam Communists are not subservient to the foreign policies pursued by Moscow.
> 4. A special dispensation for the Vietnam government has been arranged in Moscow.
>
> Of these possibilities, the first and the fourth seem most likely (Gravel ed., I:34).

While the Pentagon authors strongly criticize (but never probe the reasons for) Dulles' virulent anticommunism, they fail to explain the peculiar Franco-American minuet of the early 1950s. France forever promised more independence to the Associated States of Indochina and the United States accepted each declaration as a reason to offer more aid to an anti-Communist rather than colonial war. Here the Pentagon study discusses America's poor bargaining behavior and misuse of leverage but fails to realize that American policy could not have been changed without a major shift in American thinking about the nature of the world. What eventually altered the French posture was the course of events in Vietnam, where the French lost to an opponent whose ideas and ideals they never understood.

The section of the Pentagon study dealing with the Geneva conference and the diplomatic activities surrounding it concentrates not on what was occurring but rather on what the documents try to reflect. The authors wonder if fulfillment of the final settlement might not have been a good thing, then criticize the Geneva Accords because they "countenanced the dissociation of the U.S. and of South Vietnam," and depended on France to guarantee enforcement. What has struck other historians most about this period is the stubborn American preparation to continue the war, with help or alone, in some form or other. The Pentagon study sees only a minimal connection between the U.S. activities planned and then abandoned, and the difficulties which the Geneva conference faced.

Buried amid the documents is a highly significant one which does not appear in the New York Times or U.S. government editions of the Pentagon Papers. On

July 14, 1954, the American, French and English governments agreed on a secret position paper outlining seven points which would make any Geneva settlement into one which could be "respected." The position paper (which had been discussed by several historians before it appeared in full in the Gravel edition) specified that the Viet Minh must withdraw from Laos and Cambodia, that at least southern Vietnam and hopefully an enclave in the northern deltas should be kept, and that the Indochinese states not accept any restrictions "materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms, and to employ foreign advisers." Point 4 of the same document stipulated that an agreement could be "respected" only if it "Does not (repeat not) contain political provisions which would risk the loss of the retained area to Communist control" (Gravel ed., I:555).

The American negotiators at Geneva never grasped the crux of the matter, which was the continual military setbacks and the total political defeat which the French were experiencing in Indochina. The Pentagon authors do not understand it either, which enables them to comment, "The French had cleverly exploited the American assistance program without having brought in the Americans in full force, yet had also been unable to save Dien Bien Phu from being overrun on May 7, [1954]" (Gravel ed., I:109). To the Americans, the French desire to negotiate was evidence solely of a deplorable lack of backbone. In retrospect the Pentagon authors seem to agree and move even further into absurdity by allowing themselves and the reader to assume that the South Vietnamese government was then not only independent but also capable of carrying on the civil war. One of the best Western analysts of the French Indochina War, the late Bernard Fall, saw the key to France's defeat in the loss of almost the entire northern half of North Vietnam in the fall of 1950 and the subsequent French failure to offer a viable political alternative to the Viet Minh.

> For the French, the Indochina War was lost then and there. That it was allowed to drag on inconclusively for another four years is a testimony to the shortsightedness of the civilian authorities who were charged with drawing the political conclusions from the hopeless military situation. American aid . . . was to make no difference whatsoever to the eventual outcome of the war.[3]

The political and military lessons which Fall and others, French and Vietnamese, drew from the French experience did not influence the Americans, who repeated all the French errors more expensively, extensively and hopelessly. By 1968 neither the American policymakers nor the Pentagon authors had learned much at all.

The Pentagon study is very coy on the implications of the American plans to establish SEATO, on the American selection and support of Ngo Dinh Diem and on the role of the CIA in Saigon during and after the Geneva conference. Work which has been done on the first two issues and the revelations in the documents about the third go far to contradict the Pentagon study's contention that the United States was merely dubious about, rather than completely opposed to, not only the conference but its outcome as well. The only value of the Pentagon study of Geneva is to make even clearer than earlier accounts why the Viet Minh, who were aware of the real U.S. posture, then and later doubted the value of negotiated settlements involving the United States and implemented solely through the good faith of the parties.

The Pentagon account of the immediate post-Geneva period shows the speed with which the United States forced the French out of Indochina and the diligence with which they torpedoed the French attempts to fulfill the accords. By the end of the conference, the first of what was to be an endless flow of American advisers, researchers and intelligence agents had reached Saigon. There they began the process of "nationbuilding," disregarding Vietnamese history, culture and political heritages. Vietnam was to become a living laboratory for social scientists imbued with Cold War liberalism and fortified by a new vocabulary of social engineering. The few restrictions the new colonialists faced in Vietnam were not duplicated in Laos, which became completely an American sphere of influence and a testing ground for new forms of counterrevolution. The American military arrived in Laos and Vietnam to build the army and police forces needed to sustain unpopular governments and to create the "bastions" from which to reconquer northern Vietnam. The Vietnamization idea of the French, and the further division of ethnic minorities by organizing special forces and CIA armies from among the Montagnards, were significant policies in the 1950s although they are not treated at all in the Pentagon study.

In looking at the years of Ngo Dinh Diem's presidency the Pentagon study focuses exclusively on the weaknesses of specific programs such as pacification (in various guises), which fell apart, in their view, because America's "limited partnership" with the Vietnamese took no account of the difficulties of coordination and the problems of reconciling opposing objectives. The study does not consider the question of how a nation could be built from the outside and who the beneficiaries of such a process could be. Neither the policymakers nor the Pentagon authors choose to recognize that a neocolonial effort was under way; little was built in Vietnam although specific industries in the United States profited by supplying commodities for the import program, arms for the military, and banking facilities to help the exchanges.

In the Pentagon study, America's error is seen to have been solely the selection of the wrong individual, Ngo Dinh Diem, and the failure after 1963 to find an adequate substitute for that flawed and fallen protégé. Vietnamese and observers from the West have seen instead America's role in creating a fatal cycle of dependence. Just as foreign support of a weak regime could not be sustained in China—where the greater the foreign support and presence, the weaker the ruling clique became—outside manipulation soon made the postcolonial state of Vietnam unviable as a nationalist entity. The greater the foreign support, the less the popular support; the less the ruler's feeling of responsibility to his own people, the less he could govern and the more he needed foreign assistance. At the same time, the foreigners were trapped into a cycle of frustration and escalation. Each time a program failed to influence hearts and minds or to fulfill a given aim, the Americans reached further into their pocketbooks and bags of tricks to force the result they desired. When all efforts to win minds failed, the liberal Americans moved naturally to dominate behavior. In practice this meant the adoption of a genocidal strategy.

The American preoccupation with dominance in the area and the tactics chosen to pursue limited and long-term aims were no secret to the Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians who watched and suffered American maneuvers. As early as 1958, the Press and Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi had published, in several languages, a 96-page booklet replete with maps and charts, outlining what they argued was a longstanding American desire to use Vietnam to protect strategic interests in and along the coast of Asia. The Vietnamese authors quoted John Foster Dulles, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a succession of American generals "advising" the new anti-Communist armed forces in Saigon. The Vietnamese found ample documentation in Western journalists' reports, Saigon newspapers and the reports of the International Control Commission, which had been established by the Geneva Accords.

The Vietnamese, because of America's military focus in their country, were most aware of the complex group of advisory organizations which controlled the police, the militia, the air force, the navy, the army and the paratroops. They followed with close attention as the Americans built bases, increased arms shipments, and demonstrated their contempt for the Geneva Accords, which had sought to limit these and to neutralize the area. The Vietnamese were also aware that the economy in the south was becoming so closely tied to that of the United States and so dependent on various forms of aid that self-sufficiency was impossible.

The Pentagon study says little about either the substance or the implication of this type of "nationbuilding," even when discussing "the origins of insurgency in the south." At the beginning of the long section concerning 1954 to 1960, the Pentagon authors set the stage for subsequent distortions of Vietnamese history and continual omission of more complex analyses.

> From the perspective of the United States, the origins of the insurgency in South Vietnam raise four principal questions:
>
> 1. Was the breakdown of the peace of 1954 the fault of the U.S., or of the ambiguities and loopholes of the Geneva Accords?
> 2. Was the insurgency in essence an indigenous rebellion against Ngo Dinh Diem's oppressive government, transformed by the intervention of first the U.S., and then the DRV?
> 3. Or was it, rather, instigated, controlled, and supported from its inception by Hanoi?
> 4. When did the U.S. become aware of the Viet Cong threat to South Vietnam's internal security, and did it attempt to counter it with its aid? (Gravel ed., I:242)

The Pentagon analysts, typically, formulate "options" as interpretations of available evidence; that the DRV intervened in response to escalation by President Kennedy of attacks on southern resistance forces; that "the DRV manipulated the entire war. This is the official U.S. position, and can be supported. Nonetheless, the case is not wholly compelling, especially for the years 1955–1959"; or that "the DRV seized an opportunity to enter an ongoing internal war in 1959 prior to, and independent of, U.S. escalation" (Gravel ed., I:243).

The analyst, having dealt with caution with the second option to which his boss had always publicly subscribed, then predictably concludes that the truth lies somewhere between the second and third options. So much has been written about these issues that it seems pointless to start balancing evidence again here. But one should note that the Pentagon questions do not ask what was happening, why the United States felt compelled to intervene, or how the United States could have acted differently or not at all.

Constant attention to secondary operational issues is the hallmark of the Pentagon study. The authors do not and cannot examine the unworkability of a situation in which the United States chose the political leader, ran his campaigns, provided his backstairs CIA advisers, staffed his ministries, armed and trained his troops, set his budget requirements and income, coordinated his land and industrial policies, developed his factories, devised his tax schedules, educated his people abroad, wrote his textbooks from primary school through teachers college, manipulated his currency, and arranged his relations with neighboring states. The Pentagon authors also cannot grasp that such a state of affairs could arouse a politically conscious population to oppose outside manipulation and to struggle for social justice without planning to launch an attack on Hawaii. The Pentagon study would have been a far more rewarding work if it had dealt with any of these issues, and a far less frightening one if the reader had a sense that at least the authors if not the policymakers were aware of more than trivial implications.

For example, in assessing the reasons for the failure of pacification, the Pentagon authors tread a thin line between criticizing the Diem regime and wondering if a well-executed program might have had some success.

> This inconclusive finding, in turn, suggests that the sequential phases embodied in the doctrine of counterinsurgency may slight some very important problem areas. The evidence is not sufficient for an indictment; still less is one able to validate [*sic*] the counterinsurgent [*sic*] doctrine with reference to a program that failed. The only verdict that may be given at this time with respect to the validity of the doctrine is that used by Scots courts—"case not proved" (Gravel ed., II:131).

The chicken-and-egg problem of whether loyalty precedes security or vice versa, *in someone else's country,* is still unresolved. The unmistakable implication is that experimentation should and will continue. And that is a lot of the problem not only with the study but with the Pentagon.

As the Pentagon study moves through the years, it becomes more cautious and jargon laden, ending with a total paralysis of the will to analyze. The short-run, parochial thinking of the Pentagon authors fits well into the definition C. Wright Mills gave for "crackpot realism," that is, the warped self-sustaining logic which keeps catastrophic policies in operation because they have been in operation. The Pentagon study defends rather than analyzes how the American system works and reinforces the fallacious belief that the foreign-policy apparatus was functioning well in the service of noble causes. Many critics and more and more of the public are beginning to realize that, on the contrary,

> . . . American foreign policy is all too readily out of control and aggressive while it defines itself as responsible and defensive. The other side sees the reality and responds. Failing to recognize this reality, Americans see the response of others as provocations.[4]

Those who wonder if this is true should look not only at the wars in Korea and Vietnam, but now in Thailand as well. Since the American takeover from the British in that traditionally "independent" state, there has been an increase in the use of Thailand as a base for the war in Indochina and for the growing American air war in response, it is alleged, to the provocations of the Thai liberation movement, which seeks to oust a corrupt and repressive regime.

The Pentagon study, by its emphasis on the technical knowhow and alleged highmindedness of the American efforts in Vietnam since 1940, contributes directly to an increased American paranoia; if noble, intelligent programs failed, one must look for enemies and incompetents at home and abroad who thwarted what would have benefited all. At the same time, in its massive unreadability, the study strengthens the belief that issues of war and peace are too complex for common folk to understand. If one survives through the first two volumes, the glossary needed to cope with the later ones convinces the reader that only the "experts" can and should determine vital policies. The study contributes to the view that only those who are "experts" can criticize the government and, even more dangerously, that the words of "experts" are the only levers to change society. The Pentagon Papers should on the contrary be used as evidence to destroy the myth of "expertise." The contents of the study make clear that the policymakers, with very little information that was not available to the public, read little and thought less. Those who seek to end the war and to change America have thought carefully and read extensively; but they will not and need not read the Pentagon study.

The bureaucrats who find meaning in the study and accept its facile excuses for deliberate and destructive policies can in truth claim to believe what they read. The victims of poverty and racism in America have heard all the excuses, if not the details, before. Citizens who are concerned with America's role in the world need more understanding of the connections between aggressive foreign policy and domestic repression, between adventures undertaken to help American capital overseas and neglect of Americans at home. None of this is to be found in the Pentagon study, which still does not explain what America did in Asia and why it went so wrong.

The GIs in Vietnam, anxious to leave, are face to face with what intellectuals only write about. They neither know nor care about the history of upper-level decisionmaking. Many of them strongly suspect that what they were fighting for was never worth it. So many of them are responsible for "war crimes" that the term has no meaning. But they have grasped what most Americans, and particularly the Pentagon authors, still cannot see; the whole war is a crime, against them and against the Indochinese people. Why should it be necessary to experience total immersion in the minutiae of decisionmaking in order to function as a citizen? Reading the materials which helped trap Washington into a war that seems as endless as it is destructive seems a poor way to begin changing policy or processes.

Appendix

A great many excellent bibliographies on Indochina, the war, and American foreign policy have appeared in the past few years. I am therefore not attempting here to give more than an outline of the sources on which I rely and the books which will be more valuable to read than the Pentagon study, regardless of what one has already read.

On Vietnamese history, with attention to indigenous sources and scholarly criteria, the best works for the period up to 1954 are Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Vietnam: Histoire et Civilisation* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955); David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Jean Chesneaux, *Contribution a l'histoire de la nation vietnamienne* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1955); and Truong Buu Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Intervention, 1858 to 1900* (New Haven: Yale Monograph Series #11, 1969). One will also gain a sympathetic understanding of how the Vietnamese view their own past and use it to build the present in Nguyen Khac Vien, *Experiences Vietnameins* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1968); and Truong Chinh, *The August Revolution* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Press, 1958).

On the roots and history of American foreign policy, particularly after World War II, the collection edited by William Appleman Williams, *The Shaping of American Diplomacy,* and his volume *The Contours of American History* are excellent. I have also used *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943–1945,* by Gabriel Kolko (New York: Random House, 1968); Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War*; and David Horowitz, *From Yalta to Vietnam.* One can obtain further background on economic issues from, among other works, Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968); and Sidney Lens, *The Military-Industrial Complex* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1971). A revealing set of discussions and debates on America's past and current foreign-policy assumptions appears in Richard Pfeffer, editor, *No More Vietnams?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

Material on the American decision to oppose communism in Europe and to work through various Mafia groups will be found in Kolko's *The Politics of War.* The connection between Cold War politics, the American heroin problem and the war in Vietnam is examined and documented in Alfred W. McCoy, Cathleen Reade McCoy and Leonard P. Adams II, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

The best general summary which treats the Vietnamese issues, French policies and the growth of American intervention is George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: Delta, 1969, second edition). For background on Laos and the American war there, Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, editors, *Laos: War and Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); on Cambodian events, Jonathan S. Grant, Laurence A. G. Moss and Jonathan Unger, editors, *Cambodia: The Widening War in Indochina* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970). The most readable and concise coverage of the issues is *The Indochina Story,* by the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (New York: Bantam, 1970).

For the many topics which the Pentagon study omits in its discussion of the period 1945 to 1954, all the following books (or any one of them) are highly recommended: Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (New York: Praeger, 1963); Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography* (New York: Random House, 1967); Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967); Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Vietnam de 1940 à 1952* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1952); Jean Chesneaux, editor, *Tradition et revolution au Vietnam* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1971).

On French military and political problems in Vietnam, the works by Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1961) and *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (New York: Vintage, 1966), are fascinating, readable and superbly documented analyses of what happened and what failed. Another account is by Jules Roy, *The Battle of Dien Bien Phu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Vietnamese strategy and military-political thinking are discussed carefully by Georges Boudarel in the Chesneaux volume mentioned above.

For a balanced account of the Geneva Conference and the important events which followed: Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War: Geneva 1954* (New York: Praeger, 1969). One gets more of a sense of the conference from the memoirs of Chester Cooper, *The Last Crusade,* than one does from the Pentagon account.

Reference to the importance of the July 14, 1954, position paper is found in Marek Thee, "Background Notes on the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Laos and the Vientiane Agreements of 1956–1957" in the volume edited by Adams and McCoy listed above.

My own feeling is that the best book on China, the events of the 1940s and the American role is Graham Peck, *Two Kinds of Time* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1950) which is the most readable and illuminating eyewitness report published. Jack Belden's *China Shakes the World* explains clearly why the Chinese Communists operated as they did and why they were accepted by the population. The period from 1940 to 1948 is dealt with carefully in Barbara Tuchmann, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*. Herbert Feis, writing from government records as an ex-government official provides a detailed and useful account of American-Chinese relations in *The China Tangle*. One gets a realistic and human account of the meaning of the Chinese revolution in William Hinton, *Fan Shen: Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), while America's perceptions of China are evaluated in the book *America's Asia: Dissenting Essays on American-Asian Relations* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

The growth of the National Liberation Front in Vietnam has seldom been studied from other than the perspective of the counterinsurgency expert who inevitably misses the meaning and achievements of an organized revolutionary movement. Several excellent studies in sympathy with the Vietnamese and based on accurate reporting and good research have been written by Wilfred Burchett: *The Second Indochina War* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), *The Furtive War* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), and one of the first accounts to appear in English, *Mekong Upstream* (1957). There are many excellent works in French, including those already mentioned.

The Cambodian United National Front of Campuchea was formed after the American–South Vietnamese invasion of that country in 1970. Although there are few materials dealing with Cambodia in print, articles appear frequently in periodicals such as *The Guardian* (32 West 22 Street, New York, N.Y. 10010) and *The Indochina Chronicle* (1332 18 Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036). A new and fascinating book on all aspects of Cambodia, with emphasis on the period after the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, is Charles Meyer, *Derrière le Sourire Khmer* (Paris: Plon, 1972). Very few books have appeared on the current Thai situation, but an excellent background is Frank C. Darling, *The United States and Thailand* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1966), and articles appear frequently in *Asian Releases*, the biweekly publication of Dispatch News Service (1826 R Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009). Issues in Southeast Asian history and politics appear regularly in the *Bulletin* of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (9 Sutter Street, San Francisco, 94104). The history of American interference in Asia with special reference to the Philippines is treated well in William Pomeroy, *American Neo-Colonialism in the Philippines* (New York: International Publishers, 1969).

The *Vietnam Courier* and *Vietnamese Studies*, published in English in Hanoi, offer readable articles on a wide variety of things Vietnamese and an important means of learning about past and present events in all of Vietnam. Both publications are available at university bookstores or from China Books and Periodicals (2929 24 Street, San Francisco, California 94110). The Foreign Language Publishing House in Hanoi has printed, in French and in English, *The Real and the False Secrets of the Pentagon* (Hanoi, Le Courrier du Viet Nam, 1971), matching revelations from the study with quotations from Vietnamese leaders speaking soon after the events described in the study, and long before publication of classified information.

Information on the brutality of the war has long been available in the United States and much of it has been offered by non-antiwar writers. *Air War*, by Frank Harvey, and *Ecocide in Indochina*, edited by Barry Weisberg (San Francisco, Canfield Press, 1970), are two of the most convincing accounts. Vietnamese reports of the suffering caused by the war appear in many periodicals cited above; in addition, Americans who have worked in Vietnam have written about what they observed. The best of these books is by Don Luce and John Somer, *Vietnam: The Unheard Voices* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). Discussions of American policies in warfare and strategic aims can be found in Vietnamese publications such as the DRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *La politique d'intervention et d'aggression des États-Unis au Sud Vietnam* (Hanoi, 1962) and in Neo Lao Hak Sat writings such as *Twelve Years of U.S. Imperialist Intervention and Aggression in Laos* (1966). One often learns more details from these than from Western publications.

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1. David Welsh with David Horowitz, "Attorney at War—Clark Clifford." *Ramparts,* 1968, p. 138.

2. This information comes from the article by Henri Lanoue, "L'emprise economique des Etats-Unis sur l'Indochine avant 1950," pages 292–327 of Jean Chesneaux, ed., *Tradition et Revolution au Vietnam.* Paris: Anthropos, 1971. The statistics Lanoue offers are taken from *L'Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine,* 1943–1946, and 1948, published by the French colonial government.

3. Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis,* 2nd edition. New York: Praeger, 1963, p. 111.

4. Edward Friedman, "Problems of Dealing with an Irrational Power: America Declares War on China" in Edward Friedman and Mark Selden, eds., *America's Asia: Dissenting Essays on American-Asian Relations.* New York: Pantheon, 1970, p. 208.

10. "Supporting" the French in Indonesia? A key to an intelligent reading of Vol. I of the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers

by Philippe Devillers

United States involvement in the Vietnam war is said to have originated in President Truman's decision to provide assistance to France and the three Indochinese "Associated States" (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) in the pivotal month of February 1950.

Actually, a turning point, a crucial dilemma, was reached when the United States was asked by France to recognize the "Associated States," to whom sovereignty had just been transferred. While there was no particular problem with regard to Cambodia and Laos, Vietnam, on the contrary, did present a serious one. France wished to introduce into the community of nations a "State of Vietnam" headed by Bao Dai (a former emperor), but at the same time, Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, claimed (on January 14, 1950) that *he* and the DRV were "the only legal government of the Vietnamese people." The DRV was recognized as such by Peking and Moscow (January 1950), a fact which hastened the American decision.

The perception of a powerful Communist threat to American world interests, the collapse of the Chinese Nationalist government, the apparent alignment of People's China with Moscow indeed combined to induce Washington to action. Southeast Asia seemed to be "the target of a coordinated offensive directed by the Kremlin" (Gravel ed., I:186). U.S. policy was set to block further "Russian" expansion in Asia, the domino principle being at the root of this policy.

Indochina was of special importance "because it was the only area adjacent to China which contained a large European army which was in armed conflict with 'communist' forces" (Gravel ed., I:82). "The attempt of the patently Communist Ho Chi Minh regime to evict the French from Indochina was seen as part of the Southeast Asian manifestation of the communist world-wide aggressive intent. The resistance of France to Ho, therefore, was seen as a crucial stand on the line along which the West would contain Communism" (Gravel ed., I:81).

French ratification of the transfer of sovereignty, the French government's request for American aid in Vietnam (February 16, 1950), prompted the United States to action. Discussing the issue, the National Security Council, in NSC 64 (February 27, 1950), determined: "It is important to United States security interests that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat" (Gravel ed., I:76).

Urged by the then Deputy Under-Secretary of State Dean Rusk to consider "the strategic aspects of the situation," the Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum for the President dated March 6, 1950, described U.S. options as follows:

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> The French are irrevocably committed in Indochina and are supporting the three states as a move aimed at achieving non-Communist political stability . . . The choice confronting the United States is to support the legal [*sic*] governments in Indochina or to face the extension of Communism over the remainder of the continental area of Southeast Asia and possibly westward (Gravel ed., I:195).

On May 8, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson announced an aid program for France and the Associated States of Indochina. Thus, six weeks *before* the Korean war, a crucial decision was made which "directly involved [the United States] in the developing tragedy in Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:42). The die was cast.

The Pentagon Papers introduce an impressive amount of information and document well a period which was neglected (for lack of space) by the *New York Times* editors. With about 240 pages of "summary" and 230 pages of documents, this is an essential book for understanding American policy and the U.S. decision-making process. However, even in the "full edition," the perspective is disappointing because many important documents are missing[1] and this gap probably will prevent the reader from getting a clear idea of the chain of events leading to the early (but capital) American decisions. Also there is a surprising absence of analysis of American motivations and interests. In this respect, a key to the reading of the Pentagon Papers is useful because the official language must be decoded in order to determine precisely which American interests were being served when decisions were made.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE FATAL DECISION OF FEBRUARY 1950

When the United States decided to join (and support) France on the Indochina front, a war had been going on there for three long years. And, far from being a small conflict, it had already become a major issue in the world power-game.

Much has been said about U.S. policies in Indochina during and immediately after World War II. Did the United States back the Viet Minh, first against the pro-Vichy administration and then against de Gaulle's representatives? Did it support policies that aimed to replace a colonial administration by "international trustees"? Did it really back France to reimpose French colonial power, as the Viet Minh said?

The Pentagon Papers seek to restore the balance. "Neither interpretation squares with the record," they say. The United States was less concerned over Indochina and less purposeful than critics assume. As a matter of fact, ambivalence and ambiguity had characterized U.S. policy regarding Indochina during World War II, and this was the root of a long misunderstanding between Paris and Washington. On the one hand, Washington repeatedly reassured the French about the return of their colonial possessions; on the other, in the name of self-determination, it stood for trusteeship or independence. But trusteeship is now said to have foundered as early as March 1943, and as of April 3, 1945 (a week before the death of Roosevelt), the new doctrine of trusteeship left any decision on Indochina to France.

Truman did not question French sovereignty over Indochina, but wanted to know more about Paris intentions with regard to establishing civil liberties and increasing measures of self-government in Indochina, before formulating a declaration of policy. He did not want the French to reassert control by force. In November 1945, Washington was satisfied with French explanations and pledges that, once order was restored throughout Indochina, the "natives" would be given a greater voice in their affairs while new agreements would be concluded with the individual states.

From the Pentagon Papers, it appears that the United States did not feel concerned about the turn events took in Indochina after the Japanese surrender. They state simply that "the DRV ruled as the only civil government in all of Vietnam for a period of about 20 days. On 23 September 1945 . . . French forces overthrew the local DRV government, and declared French authority restored in Cochinchina" (Gravel ed., I:16). They mention that Ho Chi Minh sent eight messages to the United States between October 1945 and February 1946, but that the United States did not reply. They go on to report "recognition of the DRV as a Free State, part of the French Union," through an agreement signed on March 6, 1946, between Ho Chi Minh and Jean Sainteny, the French representative in Hanoi, omitting however one of its most important clauses on self-determination of Cochinchina. In April 1946, the United States acknowledged to France that all of Indochina had reverted to French control. Allied occupation of Indochina was officially over. "Thereafter, the problems of U.S. policy toward Vietnam were dealt with *in the context of the U.S. relationship with France*" (Gravel ed., I:3; emphasis ours).

This is fundamental for a sound understanding of the situation: Indochina was *not* in the same theater as China and Japan (in which West Coast and Texan interests hoped to play a major role), but part of the "European Theater," in which France played a capital role.

Washington seemed satisfied with the "peaceful cooperation between France and the DRV in North Vietnam for eight months," but the Papers do not detail or discuss the issues at stake at either the Dalat or the Fontainebleau conferences. They mention a casual contact between Ho Chi Minh and the U.S. ambassador in Paris (the Catholic Jefferson Caffery). The September 14 (1946) agreement between the French government and Ho Chi Minh, about a ceasefire and self-determination in the South as a *quid pro quo* with restoration of a federal economic authority in Indochina, is hardly mentioned, nor the subsequent failure to implement it.

When tensions developed between Paris and Hanoi, Washington apparently did its best to help, as is shown by an extremely interesting telegram, dated December 5, 1946, from Dean Acheson to the U.S. representative in Hanoi, warning against violence in Vietnam, stressing the dangers of provocateurs and the risks of a conflict, as well as the possibilities for compromise (Gravel ed., I:29). And then, on December 19, 1946, the North Vietnamese attacked.

In a memorandum to Undersecretary Acheson (December 23), John Carter Vincent, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, in a very sharp analysis indeed, recommended that the French be reminded of inherent dangers in the situation. However, the conflict was already there, and the United States regarded it as fundamentally a matter for French resolution.

The French government, in a message of January 8, 1947, assured that their "principal objective . . . was to restore order and reopen communications . . . and that after this was done, [they] would be prepared to discuss matters with the Vietnamese" and to live up to the agreements of March 6 and September 14.

The Americans wanted to be reassured; they accepted the French version, and in a probably sincere desire to be helpful, did try to prevent the conflict from widening. Secretary of State George Marshall said he hoped that "a pacific basis of adjustment of the difficulties could be found."

Early in February 1947, while General Leclerc recommended a political solution, the French government's position shifted to state that "before any negotiations, it was necessary to have a military *decision*" (emphasis ours). The U.S. ambassador in Paris, however, received revealing directives. He was given instructions first to reassure French Premier Ramadier that Indochina was of course a matter of French sovereignty, but the French certainly knew that colonialism was dead, as shown by their recent agreements with Vietnam. Washington remarked that French "understanding" of the Vietnamese position was more pronounced in Paris than in Saigon, but understood that the Vietnamese had attacked on December 19 and that the French had no reason to be generous. Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh was a Communist, and the United States did not desire to see colonial empires replaced or controlled by the Kremlin. They wanted to remain aloof, and had no solution to suggest (Gravel ed., I:4, 30–31, 50).

The solution of neutrality was thus chosen. The issue of Vietnam was completely overshadowed by the role France could be expected to play, on the Western side, in Europe. The Conference of "Big Four" foreign ministers opened in Moscow on March 10, 1947, and the Truman Doctrine was enunciated on March 12. Even if "the U.S. knew little of what was transpiring inside Vietnam," as the Papers say (Gravel ed., I:51), it is true that it "certainly cared less about Vietnam than about France."

It was *within* the French sphere, and by the French themselves, that the elimination of the Communists in Vietnam had to be achieved. Ramadier's government favored "independence and unity" for Vietnam. In accordance with Admiral d'Argenlieu's suggestions, it turned then to a political solution: restoration of Bao Dai, the former emperor. It was with him, not Ho Chi Minh, that the French decided to negotiate for a political settlement with Vietnamese nationalists. With French encouragement, groups of Vietnamese right-wing "nationalists" began advocating the installation of Bao Dai as the head of an anti-Vietminh Vietnamese regime.

Very early in the war, the French had indeed raised the specter of communism and of Red conspiracy. More recently Admiral d'Argenlieu had stressed that France's role in Indochina was primarily to stem the expansion of communism there. Implicitly Washington had agreed with this aspect of French policy and favored a non-Communist political solution, even if, in order to get it, the French had to resort to "*Vietnamization*" of the conflict, as was proposed, for the first time (although the word was not used), in Directive No. 9 (January 4, 1947) of the Political Section of the French High Commissioner's Office in Saigon.[2] Actually, the French approached Bao Dai with terms not unlike those accepted by Ho Chi Minh (unity, and autonomy within Indochinese Federation and the French Union), "provided Bao Dai formed a government which would *furnish a clear alternative to Ho Chi Minh*" (Gravel ed., I:25; emphasis ours).

The United States could then go ahead. On May 13, 1947, a few days after the Communists were ousted from the government in Paris, and immediately after the "rejection" by Ho Chi Minh of the French ultimatum for surrender, a Department of State guidance affirmed that in Southeast Asia the United States was "in [the] same boat as [the] French" (Gravel ed., I:31), that to prevent trouble, it sought "close association between newly-autonomous peoples and powers which have long been responsible [for] their welfare." This association, however, should be voluntary, avoid bitterness and frustration. Although the

United States would not interfere in French affairs, it wanted to let it be known that it felt concerned. It was important to find "true representatives of Vietnam," and not impotent puppets. A restoration of Bao Dai could do harm because it would show the world that the democracies were reduced to resorting to monarchy as a weapon against communism. It made clear that the United States foresaw France's losing Indochina if it persisted in ignoring American advice, and bypassing "truly nationalist groups" able to induce actual Vietminh supporters to come to the Western side.

The "True Doctrine" was formulated, but for a long time French and Americans were to differ as to who were the "true nationalists."

What is really appalling in the Pentagon Papers is that there is not the slightest hint that there was in Washington, at any level, a critical examination of the French theses or versions of events, as well as of the legality of the French policy from an "international law," or "peoples' law" (*jus gentium*) point of view. It is amazing that such a poor analysis of the origins of a major war could be made by "experts" occupying high and crucial positions. Summaries and documents never go to the roots and remain for the most part superficial.

At the base of the whole of the "Indochina tragedy" is the fact that the West (France first and the United States afterwards) ignored the evidence that the DRV was the new, but legal, form of the Empire of Annam, a thousand-year-old nation-state, one of the oldest in Asia, although it had been enslaved for eighty years under the guise of a French protectorate. As the Papers acknowledge, the DRV enjoyed full independence for a few weeks after September 2, 1945, restoring between North and South a unity that had been broken by France eighty years before.

It was fairly reasonable for the United States to abstain from interference in the French attempt to seek new relationships with the different states of Indochina. A new agreement was concluded between France and Cambodia as early as January 7, 1946. The March 6, 1946, agreement was signed with Ho Chi Minh as leader of Vietnam (the new name of Annam) and in it France did "recognize the Republic of Vietnam as a Free State with its Government, its Parliament, its Treasury, its Army, within the framework of the Indochinese Federation and of the French Union." This event, which was of international significance, was hailed throughout the world, from Chiang Kai-shek to Chou En-lai and Attlee, as a sign of great French wisdom and realism. The French concluded other agreements with the DRV government: a military one (April 3), a few economic accords, and a general *modus vivendi* (September 14, 1946). It was decided that, despite transformation by the French of the colony of Cochinchina into an autonomous republic, the people of Cochinchina would freely decide their relationship with the DRV.

The Ho Chi Minh government was therefore the only legal government of Vietnam and there was no challenge of this fact from the French side. Former emperor Bao Dãi had abdicated (not under force) on August 25, 1945, and had become Ho Chi Minh's "Supreme Adviser." Ho Chi Minh had been received and welcomed in Paris as Head of State and Government (July–August 1946) and in this capacity he had signed agreements with the French government. There was no further problem for anybody, including the U.S. Ambassador, about meeting with him.

How is it then, that because a confusing conflict suddenly flared up about customs and road traffic between the DRV and the French High Commission in Saigon (and their military in Tonkin), the DRV government ceased overnight to be "legal" or, to quote the Papers, "the DRV *government* [*sic*, emphasis ours] took to the hills to assume the status of a shadow state" (Gravel ed., I:47)? In fact, just because of the December 19 "attack"? The Pentagon Papers, however, cautiously add: "The issue of who was the aggressor has never been resolved" (Gravel ed., I:22).

Actually this was pure French right-wing officials' arrogance. Alleging Vietnamese breach of faith, the Bidault government and High Commissioner Admiral d'Argenlieu decided that the Ho government, as such, no longer existed! One may wonder if the explanation should not be looked for in the mind of Premier Georges Bidault. It has to be borne in mind that when things began to worsen in Morocco, in 1953, Mr. Bidault suddenly decided to depose Sultan Mohammed V and replace him by Ben Arafa. The same psychological process could have led him to believe (six years earlier) that since "Sultan Ho Chi Minh" was bad, it was necessary to get rid of him and replace him by a more amenable man, as the French generals and governors had done with the Vietnamese emperors between 1885 and 1916. Nineteenth-century colonial thinking was still prevalent among right-wing French politicians in 1946/47, and it influenced their masterplans. Looking for an alternative to the "opponents" or "resisters" led to "Vietnamization" of the conflict, i.e., helping right-wing puppets or allies of the West to "replace" leftist nationalists.

The trouble was precisely that although the United States "regretted" the risks inherent in the new conflict, it neither challenged the French legal position nor interfered in the French field of responsibility. For reasons of sheer opportunism, the United States failed to tell France that it could not *ignore* the legal government of Vietnam and especially that it should not look for an alternative, through "Vietnamization" of the war. Actually, the United States agreed with this French course, and abdicated *then* all principles of morality. This *essential, fundamental* aspect of the story is totally lacking in the Pentagon Papers, and therefore *remains practically hidden from the American public.*

Why did the United States *endorse* (at least implicitly) the French position?

Because it gave priority to the "Battle for Europe"! France was an essential piece in the American game in Europe, and at the time France was causing some anxiety in Washington because it was still trying to remain unaligned and independent between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-American bloc. Also, a powerful Communist party was participating in the French government at that moment. Taking sides just then in favor of Ho Chi Minh, in this colonial crisis, would certainly have infuriated the French right wing and made it anti-American, unwilling to come, under the Western banner, against communism. The Communists would have exploited U.S. interference for their own benefit.

Hardening of anticommunism in the United States, plus the priority given to the "necessary containment of Soviet Russia," made it impossible to weaken the French and allow them to be replaced in Indochina by "Kremlin agents." There was no risk, however, in having them replaced, in the long run, by "true nationalists." At that moment, these latter were in China, protected by the Chinese Kuomintang and their friends in General Donovan's OSS, with support of the California-based China Lobby. The problem now was to decide how to manage to get the Chinese-American agents (the "true nationalists") aboard the French "boat," Bao Dai, and under this cover, achieve successful "Vietnamization" of the conflict.

The Pentagon Papers do not say a word about the activities of the "true nationalists" at that time, or about the OSS-CIA plans. The Defense Department probably had no such files. The writers, consequently, could only offer poor, very poor, excuses for the choice Washington made in 1946–1947.

Here are two examples: "No French government is likely to have survived a genuinely liberal policy toward Ho in 1945 or 1946. Even French Communists then favored redemption [*sic*] of control in Indochina" (Gravel ed., I:52). Further, they say that U.S. support for Ho Chi Minh would have involved perspicacity and risk, "a perspicacity unique in U.S. history," but Washington could not take the risk of having a domino fall. So "the path of prudence rather than the path of risk seemed the wisest choice."

This was, however, also a risk. As the Papers say, "Washington and Paris did not focus on the fact of Ho's strength, only on the consequences of his rule": Ho was a Communist. . . .

In fact, the record shows that the United States well knew what was at stake, and how extensive was the strength of Ho. In an interesting analysis ("The Character and Power of the Vietminh. A Summary"), the Pentagon Papers throw light on how highly appraised Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh were. The Vietminh is described as "the principal vehicle for Vietnamese nationalism and anti-French colonialism," and Ho Chi Minh as "the only Vietnamese wartime leader with a national following" (Gravel ed., I:49). Elsewhere the report adds: "It seems likely that in the absence of the French, the Vietminh, through its governmental creation, the DRV, would have overridden indigenous, tribal, religious and other opposition in short order" (Gravel ed., I:43).

Unfortunately for Washington, the ICP (Indochinese Communist Party) was the controlling element in the Vietminh, and the French exploited this fact in order to restore by force their control over Vietnam. Consequently "Ho again became the head of Viet resistance and the Vietminh became the primary nationalist protagonist. Hence Ho Chi Minh, both on his own merits and out of lack of competition, became the personification of Vietnamese nationalism" (Gravel ed., I:49).

Moreover, the Vietminh was not even anti-American. In the fall of 1948, the Office of Intelligence Research (Department of State) wrote a survey of Communist and American influence in Southeast Asia in which it said that "evidence of Kremlin-directed conspiracy was found in virtually all countries except Vietnam." It added that "since December 19, 1946, there have been continuous conflicts between French forces and *the nationalist government of Vietnam* [emphasis ours]. This government is a coalition in which avowed communists hold influential positions. Although the French admit the influence of this government, they have consistently refused to deal with its leader, Ho Chi Minh, on the grounds that he is a Communist. To date the Vietnam press and radio have not adopted an anti-American position. . . . Although the Vietnam radio has been closely watched for a new position toward the U.S., no change has appeared so far" (Gravel ed., I:34).

There was clearly an "anomaly" in the Soviet conspiracy, but the State Department rejected as unlikely the possibility that the Vietnamese Communists might not be subservient to Moscow's foreign policy.

However, although French chances of crushing Vietnamese nationalism were limited, Washington decided to back French policy of "Vietnamization" on the basis of anticommunism. This meant that in a different context of course, *the United States approved a policy which was not basically different from those followed by the Third Reich in Norway (with Quisling), or by Japan in occupied China (with the Nanking government of Wang Ching-wei). It was the policy of imposing a regime and policy on a country through Quisling or puppet governments.* As the Papers say: "When the U.S. was faced with an unambiguous choice between a policy of anticolonialism and a policy of anticommunism, it chose the latter" (Gravel ed., I:179). This was to be confirmed again in the spring of 1950.

By completely omitting the crucial legal aspect of the conflict, the Pentagon Papers tend to give some legitimacy to the French action, *because* supporting the French in the name of anticommunism is *the only presentable* basis for the American involvement in Vietnam. Within the framework of French sovereignty, everything became honorable, but *it is* precisely *the upturn given their Indochina policy by the French right-wing and Socialist parties which is at the root of the tragedy.*

Taking for granted that the Soviet Union was "The Enemy," and that the struggle for "containment" had to be fought all over the world, it was legitimate to help France resist Communist "subversion" in its colonies. As long as Moscow did not push too much in Asia, it was believed that France would do the job in Indochina. It could get rid of the Communists there through its own ways and means. But when Russia "conquered" China with Maoism and made it a "Slav Manchukuo" (Dean Rusk *dixit*), Red China became the main danger, and France could no longer cope with it alone. The United States had to come in and help. Anyway it was the Joint Chief of Staff's belief, early in 1950, that "attainment of United States objectives in Asia can only be achieved by ultimate success in China." [3]

Basically, this was the theme of the famous "China lobby." Nobody tells us, in this volume, why "the Communists" won in China and why they came to be hostile to the United States. There is not a word about the American intervention in China or of the failure of "Sinization'" of the conflict there.

Fundamental omissions thus make the Pentagon Papers rather disappointing on the "French period." The Papers give rare clues as to how mistakes or miscalculations developed in the formation and implementation of policies but offer only very superficial insights into the deep, real causes or origins of the war. However, it is clear to every objective historian that the United States cautiously but graciously supported France on the wrong road on which it was embarking. In Washington, France and the United States were indeed considered to be "in the same boat."

THE AMBIGUITY OF AMERICAN-FRENCH RELATIONS ON VIETNAM

While cautiously endorsing, as early as February 1947, French policy in Indochina, the Truman Administration was nevertheless skeptical and even believed that the French were unrealistic, that they did not have "the technique" to wage an efficient anti-Communist battle, and would eventually fail.

In its opinion, France had to win the support of the "true nationalists," i.e., anti-Communist Nationalists.[4] It was promptly made clear by Washington that France would eventually lose Indochina if it did not offer the "true nationalists" enough (independence, etc.) to induce the Vietminh supporters to come to their side. The French, however, were reluctant to yield anything significant to Bao Dai.

The Papers briefly report that Bao Dai was "convinced that the French situation in Indochina was sufficiently desperate that they would have to honor commitments they made to him" and that he also "seems to have believed that he could attract American support and material aid—a view which may have stemmed in part from a 1947 *Life* magazine article by William C. Bullitt, the influential former U.S. ambassador to France, endorsing Bao Dai as a solution to France's dilemma" (Gravel ed., I:25).

Actually, while remaining a private person without a clear mandate,[5] Bao Dai negotiated new agreements with the French. Paris had been urged by the Americans to reach "a non-Communist solution in Indochina based on cooperation of true nationalists of that country" (September 1948) and warned against attempting to set up a puppet government (January 17, 1949). On March 8, 1949, France recognized Vietnam as an independent state within the French Union and agreed to a merger of Cochinchina with Vietnam. Bao Dai returned to Vietnam and appointed himself head of the newly formed "State of Vietnam."

On May 10, 1949, the French raised the problem of U.S. aid and recognition. They stressed that a decision was urgent because of the Communist advance in China. In their opinion, there was no alternative to Bao Dai.

In Washington, however, there was no enthusiasm for and even reluctance to support the French and Bao Dai in Vietnam. To the United States, "the State of Vietnam [had become] a camouflage for continued French rule in Indochina" (Gravel ed., I:59). Nevertheless, there were, in 1949, significant behind-the-scene negotiations and agreements between American and French banking concerns on future cooperation in "overseas development" and this apparently encouraged the New York and possibly San Francisco financial and economic groups to support the French position in Indochina. The "loss" of China accelerated the process: Southeast Asia could now be a substitute market.

At the end of 1949, after the Jessup fact-finding mission, a new policy was formulated: increase the ability of the free peoples to resist direct and indirect aggression and to maintain internal security; prevent Southeast Asia from being overrun by communism and encourage European friends to make use of their knowledge and experience and Asian non-Communist states to join the UK and the U.S. The New York economic establishment would be happy to support such schemes because its "European friends" would give it advantage over the competitive West Coast interests in the area. The National Security Council, on December 30, 1949, approved: it was necessary to bring the "nationalists" to back Bao Dai, to increase the Western orientation of the area, to block further Communist expansion in Asia. This was the green light for recognition of Bao Dai.

But the fatal decision of February 1950 turned out badly. Who should be the recipient of the aid? Bao Dai or France? And consequently whose policies would U.S. aid support? How could the Americans insist upon having what they called a "democratic-nationalist government" in Vietnam? A decision was difficult. The French were intransigent, opposed direct U.S. aid for the Vietnamese forces, even though they could not instill real determination and élan into the Bao Dai army. Strong-willed French military commanders, being suspicious of the United States were determined on a military victory and believed they could win, provided they got American weaponry.

Washington well knew that the Bao Dai regime was neither popular nor efficient and that the French also were very reluctant to yield power to Bao Dai. Americans got impatient and, going over the head of the French, tried to encourage Bao Dai to play a more active role. The Papers publish an extraordinary message from Dean Acheson to Edmund Gullion, U.S. representative in Saigon (October 18, 1950), directing him to tell Bao Dai what he should do: abandon neutralism and passivity, and fight the Communists (Gravel ed., I:70–71).

The U.S. efforts were in vain, and critics (probably from the West Coast circles and interests) began to say that the United States was not using enough leverage to move the French toward granting genuine Vietnamese independence.

The Defense Department Papers answered the critics by alleging that during this period, because of "the primacy accorded in U.S. policy to the containment of communism in Southeast Asia" (Gravel ed., I:75), France had a stronger bargaining position than the United States.

This, however, is only part of the truth. In fact, the U.S. interests in Europe (mainly from the East Coast, i.e., New York) had given France prominence and this had led to a pragmatic alliance between the New York and French right-wing bourgeoisie against the Soviet Union and "socialism" in general. This implied that New York could force the California-based Far Eastern lobby to respect French interests in Indochina and support Bao Dai. To the extent that the United States needed and pursued an anti-Soviet policy in Europe, and wanted to discourage neutralism in Paris, it had to respect and even to support French Indochinese policy.

As the Papers rightly say:

> Neither NATO nor the Marshall Plan offered usable fulcrums for influencing French policy on Indochina. Both were judged by the U.S. government and public to be strongly in the American national interest at a time when the Soviet threat to Western Europe, either through overt aggression or internal subversion, was clearly recognizable. A communist take-over in France was a real possibility. . . . Thus, an American threat to withdraw military and economic support to metropolitan France if it did not alter its policies in Indochina was not plausible. To threaten France with sanctions . . . would have jeopardized a U.S. interest in Europe more important than any in Indochina (Gravel ed., I:76).

Actually, the real bargaining had to take place, *within the U.S. economic empire,* between the European-oriented interests and the Asian-oriented ones. The strength of the former allowed France to resist pressures about any policies in Indochina. There was incompatibility, not (as the Papers allege) in the two stands of U.S. policy, but between the foreign policies of the two main factions of the American Economic Establishment.

Therefore, rather than aiding France as a colonial power or a fellow NATO ally, the rationale for the decision to aid the French was simply to keep Indochina in the Western domain, to avert its sliding into the Communist camp. As far as the distribution of "shares" between the West Coast and New York interests was concerned, they would determine that later. Both agreed that, for the moment, the United States should support independence for the Associated States of Indochina, encouraging the French to grant them *full* independence and to train good public servants for them.

Certainly, it was uncomfortable for the United States to find itself "in the same bed as the French" (Gravel ed., I:76), and Washington was also quite aware of the high sensitivity of the French to any interference in their internal affairs, but it thought the deal was worthwhile.

With the outbreak of the Korean war, holding the line in Southeast Asia became essential to American security interests, and "the French struggle in Indochina came far more than before to be seen as an integral part of the containment of Communism in that region of the world. Accordingly, the United States intensified and enlarged its program of aid in Indochina." But "a consequence of the Korean war, and particularly the Chinese intervention, was that China replaced the Soviet Union as the principal source of the perceived communist threat in Southeast Asia . . ." (Gravel ed., I:82). This suited perfectly well the West Coast economic interests: the Chinese Communists were their main enemies. They now had good leverage against New York, because the Pentagon would now support them more than before. As the Papers clearly state: "The French [in Indochina] were, in a way, fighting a U.S. battle" (Gravel ed., I:79) and it was no longer useful to know who was right in Vietnam and what the Vietnamese people might think or prefer.

Primarily, however, it was still France's war, and French leverage had not weakened. France could now use the threat of negotiating a pulling out from Vietnam ["an important instrument of blackmail," the Papers say (Gravel ed., I:79)], because the U.S. leverage in Europe was losing strength. Washington and New York wanted to rearm West Germany against the Soviet Union to alleviate the U.S. "burden." French opposition to German rearmament led to a compromise: the EDC Project (European Defense Community). The purpose was to "envelope" a West German army into an integrated six-nation army for the defense of Western Europe (thus making possible a reduction, not the elimination, of American ground forces in Europe and a sharing of the "burden"). Because of the necessity to push the EDC through, there was in Washington further reluctance to antagonize the French in Indochina. But the French gave EDC a far lower priority than expected. They did not feel any longer that there was *a serious threat* in Europe; they were wary of Germany and they gave low probability to a Soviet attack. They further stressed that there was a conflict between EDC (West German rearmament and the corresponding French balancing effort in Europe) and a massive French drive for victory in Vietnam. EDC could start *only after* a French victory in Indochina, they said.

The Papers stress Washington's poor bargaining position: "The U.S. became virtually a prisoner of its own policy. Containment of communism, concern for the French in relation to the postwar Europe of NATO, EDC, and the Soviet threat in the West, combined with a fear . . . that a French withdrawal from Indochina would leave exposed the U.S. flank in Korea, all compelled the U.S. to continue aid" (Gravel ed., I:203).

It can thus safely be said there was great ambiguity in the relationship of France and the United States concerning Indochina, but it was not clear that there was, as the Papers write, "incompatibility of American and French objectives" (Gravel ed., I:80). Were these objectives and interests really and basically *different?* While the United States seemed only concerned with the containment of communism and restricting the spread of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia (to protect potential or future markets) the French were not simply fighting to contain communism, but primarily to maintain their influence in Indochina and to avoid a crumbling of the French Union. They could not be expected (as the United States wished) to just "win the war" and then gracefully withdraw. And if their enemy now was the same as the United States', they still nourished a deep suspicion that the United States desired above all to supplant them in Southeast Asia.

The Pentagon Papers shed some light on the ultimate American goals. The United States, involved in the Korean war, could not afford to wage another war in Indochina at the same time. But it was willing to help in the formation of national armies (this would increase the influence of the military). This would require much time and it was necessary to have the French remain there at least until these national armies were ready, because no American troops were available. A National Security Council paper (NSC 64/1, dated November 28, 1950), written just after Chinese intervention in Korea and the French disaster in North

Tonkin and which was to remain the basis of U.S. policy toward Indochina for the duration of the French war, set short- and long-term objectives: deny Indochina to communism, promote self-government there, help in the formation and training of national armies. This policy, it was added, would be reconsidered if France abandoned the struggle (Gravel ed., I:198–200).

In the meantime, there was an apparently serious fear of Chinese intervention in Indochina, and although this fear was later to subside, the National Security Council in 1952 listed "courses of action" to defend Indochina (in such a case) with aerial and naval action against China itself (which was to be the point of "ultimate success"). Thus, the anti-Peking lobby concentrated on the less probable hypothesis (presenting risks of major and even world conflict) rather than on the more likely course, a deterioration of the French military position, which would have to be alleviated, but without giving the United States the leadership or relieving France of its basic responsibility for the defense of the Associated States.

Assuming power in January 1953, the Republican Eisenhower-Nixon Administration proposed a "new, positive foreign policy," but designated China as "the principal enemy," linking from the start Indochina with Korea.

The Vietminh invasion of Laos and increasing war-weariness in France were a source of worry for Washington. Indochina's importance to U.S. "security interests" in the Far East was now taken for granted by all American factions. Its "loss" would not be permitted. Although Stalin's death had introduced possible flexibility in Communist policies and let the French wonder why they couldn't have in Indochina an armistice like the one the United States had just concluded in Korea, Dulles urged the French to drive toward military victory rather than to look to a ceasefire with the DRV. He barred negotiations until France had "markedly improved its bargaining position through action on the battlefield" (Gravel ed., I:55).

Of course Dulles, at that moment, was not ready again to involve American land forces in another war on the continent of Asia. He thought victory could be achieved through increased military assistance to France, the Associated States and Thailand. Strongly supported by U.S. General O'Daniel, the French "Navarre Plan" was found attractive, and an expectation of French military victory, or at least of a good French show of strength, swept Washington in the fall of 1953.

There was, however, considerable risk that China, now relieved from the war in Korea, would intervene in Indochina on Ho Chi Minh's side. The French wanted to get American guarantees against it. Basically they were now eager to find an honorable end to the war and hinted that they would welcome negotiations once the military situation permitted it. Dulles agreed to issue warnings to Peking, in order to deter further Chinese involvement. He threatened China with massive retaliation if it shifted its offensive to Indochina, but "the U.S. sought to convince the French that military victory was the only guarantee of diplomatic success" (Gravel ed., I:96), and foreclosed negotiating in Indochina until after a Chinese decision to eliminate or cut down aid to the Vietminh. Dulles reportedly told Bidault that "negotiations with no other alternative usually end in capitulation" (Gravel ed., I:96).

Quite suddenly, there was great concern about French political determination. The Papers do not even hint that Washington officials had any perception of the causes of French hesitation. With the emergence in Saigon (in the fall of 1953) of an anti-French right wing (under Ngo Dinh Nhu), and the related change in Bao Dai's attitude, the public urge for peace gained momentum, and the French Assembly's debate expressed it. Although the French government dismissed as "pure propaganda" Ho Chi Minh's interview (November 29, 1953) and reassured the United States, the peace-feelers had a great effect on opinion.

The antiwar feeling and movement led by the influential weekly *L'Express* developed so fast that in January 1954 Laniel could no longer ignore it. When the Big Four Conference opened in Berlin, French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault *had* to put forward the idea of an international conference on Indochina. He could pressure Dulles by threatening to scuttle the project for the European Defense Community (EDC), which then was a top U.S. priority. On January 18, 1954, the Big Four decided that a conference on Indochina would start in Geneva on April 26, with the participation of People's China. In Washington, there was the beginning of near panic.

TAKING OVER THE WAR FROM FRANCE

Indochina was seen as an essential area mostly by the West Coast interests and the Defense industries tied to them, for whom the containment of China had high priority. They also feared that the loss of Southeast Asia would force Japan into an accommodation with the Communist bloc. These circles simply could not accept the prospect of a settlement which would either leave France in control (alone or in alliance with New York interests) or (worse) give the Communists a part of the area. The widening audience of the "Peace faction" in Paris was a source of considerable anxiety and perplexity.

As early as February 1952, the National Security Council had suggested that the United States might be forced to take military action in Indochina. With the deterioration of the French military situation there in December 1953, serious attention was given for the first time to the manner and size of a possible U.S. intervention, which could at least deter (or prevent) the French from resorting to negotiations.

The Defense Department, however, was not of a single mind on this question. It is worth recording that Vice-Admiral A. C. Davis, Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs (Office of the Secretary of Defense) then stressed that "involvement of U.S. forces in the Indochina war should be avoided at all practical costs," because it is impossible to engage "Naval and Air units only." "There is no cheap way to fight a war, once committed," he said (Gravel ed., I:89).

Evident disparity between how East and West Coast interests appreciated strategic evaluation of Indochina, and incapacity to reach a decision on the forces required to defend the area, led to an important NSC meeting on January 8, 1954. It appeared that the State Department favored intervention, probably as insurance against French "dissidence" (the Berlin conference was to open next week). The Defense Department opposed it, arguing that France could win only with U.S. aid and indigenous support. In order to agree, both sides decided to set up a special working group, under General Erskine.

An important NSC paper (5405, January 16, 1954) discussed the possibility of negotiations (Dulles was then talking about that at Berlin), and the author of the Papers' summary analyzed it as follows:

> The NSC decided the U.S. should employ every feasible means to influence the French Government against concluding the struggle on terms "inconsistent" with the basic U.S. objectives. The French should be told that: (1) in the absence of a marked improvement in the military situation, there was

> no basis for negotiations on acceptable terms; (2) that the U.S. would "flatly oppose any idea" of a cease-fire as a preliminary to negotiations, because such a cease-fire would result in a irretrievable deterioration of the Franco-Vietnamese military position in Indochina; (3) *a nominally non-communist coalition regime would eventually turn the country over to Ho Chi Minh with no opportunity for the replacement of the French by the United States or the United Kingdom* [Emphasis added].[6] . . . If the French actually enter into negotiations with the communists, insist that the United States be consulted and seek to influence the course of the negotiations.[7]

General Erskine's two reports, which were discussed on February 6 and March 17, were extremely negative and tough about the possible solutions of the conflict, successively rejecting (a) imposition of a ceasefire; (b) establishment of a coalition government; (c) self-determination through free elections ("such a course would in any case lead to the loss of the Associated States to Communist control"). A partition of the country would be bad and the maintenance of the status quo was now difficult. In brief, Erskine's report concluded that from the point of view of the U.S. strategic position in Asia, *no solution to the Indochina problem short of victory was acceptable.* It recommended that prior to the start of the Geneva conference the United States should inform Britain and France that it was only interested in victory in Indochina and would not associate itself with any settlement which fell short of that objective. Acknowledging that "the French desire for peace in Indochina almost at any cost represents our greatest vulnerability in the Geneva talks" (Gravel ed., I:452), it further recommended that in the event of an unsatisfactory outcome at Geneva, the United States should pursue ways of continuing the struggle in concert with the Associated States, the UK and other allies. The NSC had therefore to determine the extent of American willingness to commit forces to the region with or without French cooperation. With the siege of Dien Bien Phu just beginning, and the Geneva Conference six weeks away, Erskine nonetheless suggested that the United States observe (and influence) developments at the conference before deciding on active involvement (Gravel ed., I:91).

However, the problem now was to know whether the United States could eventually accept the "loss" of "French" Indochina (while doing everything to prevent further deterioration), or undertake new direct action to save Indochina *before* some unacceptable settlement should emerge at Geneva.

The military chiefs were against direct U.S. intervention, but would agree to help the French to hold and even to "rectify" French deficiencies. In this respect, the Pentagon Papers say that no record of Operation Vulture (U.S. bombing against Communist forces besieging Dien Bien Phu) has been found in the files (Gravel ed., I:97). It seems, nevertheless, that Admiral Radford (Chairman of the JCS) and Vice-President Nixon, then a clever spokesman for West Coast interests, favored strong, swift and decisive action on the side of the French.

President Eisenhower was opposed to any direct intervention, and probably Dulles, too. The Pentagon Papers, however, do not throw light on their motivations, which are left to the reader's guess. They record almost incidentally (Gravel ed., I:134) that "the partition alternative, specifically at the 16th parallel, [was] intimated to American officials as early as March 4 by a member of the Soviet Embassy in London, apparently out of awareness of Franco-American objections to a coalition arrangement for Vietnam." This certainly had given Dulles a clue that the other side might accept a territorial compromise. Was this not an opportunity for the United States to take over the political leadership of the truncated Vietnam State? Dulles was then to develop a subtle maneuver that the Papers, without mentioning it, document well.

Actually Dulles was to hide the maneuver behind various smokescreens, and first of all strong militant words basically aimed at giving the US an ultimately controlling position in the negotiation, while preventing, in the interval, negotiations by others and primarily by France.

Dulles' maneuver developed fast. In a memorable speech on March 29, he stressed the alarming situation in Indochina, alleged and dramatized the Chinese threat, delivered a strong warning to Peking, and called for the "united action" of the West. This was to reassure and please right-wing (Southern and Western) opinion inside the United States. It also: (a) gave apparent support to the French, who would be tempted at least to delay negotiation and wait for improvement of their military situation; and (b) extended East Coast leverage (through a NATO-like structure), probably bring genuine "nationalists" into power in Saigon, and offer a scapegoat (the British) if something failed. Anyway, at least for a while, "united action" would be used as an alternative both to negotiation and to U.S. unilateral intervention.

On April 3, President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles got the approval of congressional leaders on the course they had chosen. The United States would not undertake unilateral intervention. Its participation in the war would be contingent upon the formation of a coalition (with the UK and Asian powers), a French declaration giving full independence to the Associated States, and congressional approval (which was dependent upon the first two conditions). The French would continue the war, with allied support, until victory, except if negotiations were just a face-saving device to cover a Communist withdrawal.

As everyone knows, the British government's answer was negative. They would do nothing before the Geneva Conference, they said, but would decide later, according to the results. Meanwhile they would give full diplomatic support to the French, and in their view, the best outcome would be a negotiated partition (In March the Soviet Embassy in London had also approached the British).

France remained the key. Was she ready, with allied support, to pursue the war until victory? Washington intensified U.S. pressure on the French to deter them from negotiation. On April 17, Nixon went so far as to advocate sending the boys to Indochina (Gravel ed., I:104). At the end of April, a dramatic show (of strength) to force the British to accept a commitment ended in complete failure. The United States was forced to accept the fact that at least the negotiations would start at Geneva.

However, Washington was sure that Communist terms would be "unacceptable" and defined its position in "maximalist" terms, equivalent to victory, to be imposed upon the others. A National Security Council meeting, on May 8, set forth the guidelines of U.S. policy on negotiations for the U.S. delegation at Geneva.[8] The United States would stand for nothing less than territorial integrity, political independence, security against aggression and subversion, stability of government, economic expansion, etc., but would not associate with a settlement, nor guarantee it, retaining the possibility of retaking the initiative. Moreover, in this meeting

> the NSC . . . decided that the French had to be pressured into adopting a strong posture in the face of probable Communist intransigence. The President was urged to inform Paris that French acquiescence in a Communist takeover of Indochina would bear not only on France's future position in

> the Far East, but also on its status as one of the Big Three; that abandonment of Indochina would *grievously affect both France's position in North Africa and Franco-U.S. relations in that region* [emphasis ours]; that U.S. aid to France would automatically cease upon Paris' conclusion of a unsatisfactory settlement; and, finally, that Communist domination of Indochina would be of such serious strategic harm to U.S. interests as to produce "consequences in Europe. . . ." In addition, the NSC recommended that the United States determine immediately whether the Associated States should be approached with a view to continuing the anti–Viet Minh struggle in some other form, including unilateral American involvement "if necessary." The NSC clearly viewed the Indochina situation with extreme anxiety, and its action program amounted to unprecedented proposals to threaten France with the serious repercussions of a sell-out in Southeast Asia.[9]

But the American leverage was not good. The Administration had carefully made direct involvement conditional on a range of French concessions and promises, especially concerning Vietnamese independence and separate peace. They said it was just to provide an alternative, once the French had conceded that negotiation was a wasteful exercise. Dulles still thought the French would like to win the war (rather than negotiate), and hoped that through "united action" and U.S. "aid," Washington would quietly take over leadership of the struggle, eventually imposing "true nationalists" (in fact, obvious CIA agents or puppets) in the Saigon government.

The French, however, had different thoughts. Premier Laniel reaffirmed in Paris that his government would not directly or indirectly turn Indochina over to the Communists. But the French desired only local assistance, not an "internationalization of the war" (in which they would lose control). At bottom, they did not wish American intervention. For them it was just an option, to be kept open until every effort to reach serious agreement at Geneva had been exhausted. Moreover the American conditions were unacceptable to them: they could not accept having the Associated States secede from France (to become Washington's satellites), while France would still continue to fight for their defense, as the Pentagon's infantry.

Just here a great turningpoint was reached, and strangely enough the Papers do not throw light on, and even seem to avoid mentioning two often-unnoticed but capital events which suddenly changed the whole American approach.

On the one hand, the "Saigon Military Mission" (SMM)—a cover for the CIA—with its chief, Colonel Ed Lansdale, USAF, arrived in Saigon on June 1 (Gravel ed., I:574), and met General Donovan (a CIA boss) there on June 3. Awkwardly the Papers do not publish the decisions reached at the 200th NSC meeting on June 3. On the other hand, French sources had revealed that at this very moment, Bao Dai, under U.S. pressure, called on Ngo Dinh Diem to become Vietnam's Prime Minister. Dulles had got his trump cards and aces. The United States could quietly drop "united action."

Actually, Washington security planners then began to focus on the future possibilities of collective defense in Southeast Asia, a system to be set up *after* a Geneva settlement. The consequence was a sudden determination to help to bring about the best possible settlement terms.

After the fall of the Laniel-Bidault government in Paris, Dulles decided on June 15 that "united action was no longer tenable." The new French Cabinet, with Pierre Mendès France as Premier, had a quite different approach and Washington feared that the French would yield in Geneva or even accept some "sell-out." "Paris, it was felt, could no longer be counted on as an active participant in regional security" (Gravel ed., I:131).

With the softening of Chinese attitudes, the possibility of a compromise no longer looked grim,[10] and at this point "the United States began to move in the direction of becoming an influential actor at the negotiations. . . . Washington believed that inasmuch as a settlement was certain to come about, and even though there was near-equal certainty it could not support the final terms, basic American and Western interests in Southeast Asia might still be preserved if France could be persuaded to toughen its stand" (Gravel ed., I:141).

The British then still believed in the possibility of a "neutral belt" giving the Communists the security they needed; they still believed in the possibility of dividing Vietnam in this framework, and accepted the view that once a settlement had been achieved, a system for guaranteeing the security of the "neutral states" thus formed would be required.

A partition settlement would certainly offer many dangerous aspects, but the question then was turning out to be "how much territory the Communists could be granted without compromising non-Communist Indochina's security, what measures were needed to guarantee that security, and what other military and political principles were vital to any settlement which the French would also be willing to adopt in the negotiations" (Gravel ed., I:142).

It has to be understood (and this aspect is totally absent from the Pentagon Papers) that once Diem had come to power in Saigon (June 17), the United States *could* accept partition. The United States needed British support and participation in the Collective Defense arrangement. "American acceptance of partition as a workable arrangement put Washington and London on even terms" (Gravel ed., I:143). Eisenhower and Churchill could agree, on June 29, on the "Seven Points": the United States "would not oppose a settlement which conformed to the Seven Points" and would even "respect" it. On July 13, Mendès France, in order to bring the Americans to support him at Geneva in the final bargaining, "formally subscribed to the Seven Points and . . . agreed to American plans for dealing with the aftermath of the Conference" (Gravel ed., I:152).

The Chinese, however, made plain that a settlement was contingent upon Western acceptance of their neutralization plans: foreign military bases had to be barred from Indochina, and the Associated States denied admission to any military bloc. Mendès France accepted that too.

France, on July 20, concluded agreements with the DRV on the basis of "independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam" and the designation of a "provisional military demarcation line" between the French Union's forces and the Vietnamese People's Army (a *de facto* partition) *tied to* a date for all-Vietnam elections. The United States only took note, but pledged it would "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb the accords."

Washington had to concede that the Geneva Accords represented a reasonable outcome, given the military conditions prevailing in Indochina. Bedell-Smith said he was "convinced that the results are the best that we could possibly have obtained in the circumstances" (Gravel ed., I:176).

However, "the view that Geneva had come out better than could have been expected was the one offered publicly" (Gravel ed., I:176). Although the major provisions of the settlement conformed surprisingly well with the Seven Points, the fact that another territory had been formally ceded to the Communists, that American military assistance to Indochina (at a cost of $2.6 billion) had neither assured the French a military or diplomatic success nor prevented the "loss" of North Vietnam weighed heavily on the Administration. In its meetings of August

8–12, 1954, the National Security Council evaluated the Geneva Accords as "a major defeat for United States diplomacy and a potential disaster for United States security interests . . . a major forward stride of communism which may lead to the loss of Southeast Asia." A new objective was set: at all costs "to prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections" (Gravel ed., I:177).

Having failed in their attempt to dominate (with the French) the whole of Vietnam through a "national" government of the Quisling or Wang Ching-wei type, the United States was then retreating on a "separatist" (secessionist) solution, the model of which could be found in a Japanese-type Manchukuo, or in the German-type Slovakia, with a puppet government manipulated by "advisers."

Washington was eager to strengthen "free" Vietnam, needed French cooperation and support to implement its "aid" programs, but demanded that France treat South Vietnam as an independent sovereign nation, in the hope of winning nationalist support away from the Vietminh. Economic and financial aid would be given directly to Diem, as a way to accelerate the "dissociation of France from economic levers of command" and boost Vietnamese independence. French domination in this area, the Papers admit, *"also inhibited American economic interests"* (Gravel ed., I:214; emphasis ours). Militarily, the United States would build up "indigenous military forces necessary for internal security . . . working through the French only insofar as necessary." In other words, the United States asked the French to stay in Vietnam militarily, but to get out of Vietnamese economic and political life. As the Papers say, "this was probably asking too much." [11]

Decisions reached in Washington in August 1954 probably reflected the outcome of the behind-the-scenes inner struggle which, within what could be called the "Central Committee of the American Mammonist (or Capitalist) Party," opposed the Eastern Economic Establishment and the Western Military-Industrial Complex. The Dulles-Robertson-Young team offered two courses: (a) to strengthen the Diem government by political and economic means (this suited the East Coast interests; and (b) to bolster this government by strengthening the army that supports it (good news for the West Coast, the Pentagon and the Military-Industrial Complex).

Political considerations were to bring U.S. policy to shift to a decision to replace France in Vietnam as rapidly as possible. With the arrival of the Sainteny Mission in Hanoi in early October 1954, the fear swept official Washington that France and the DRV might make a deal and agree to keep the United States on the outside. This was now too great a risk to be accepted.

Resolutions of differences within the Eisenhower Administration on military issues (the training of the Vietnamese army) opened the way for U.S. assumption of *responsibilities* in Vietnam. To back Diem and oust the French became the basic motivations as early as October 1954. Washington first cut down by two-thirds funds for supporting the French military presence in Indochina. In November, the outbreak of the Algerian uprising gave timely help to the American plans in Vietnam. There was thereafter "strong sentiment in France for sending the French Expeditionary Corps to North Africa" (Gravel ed., I:224).

Tensions arose between the United States and France about Diem and the Saigon army. "To support or not to support Ngo Dinh Diem was the issue over which France and America split" (Gravel ed., I:225). Washington stood firm. "No other suitable leader can be seen," Dulles said, and the Papers add: Diem "for all his failings and weaknesses was the only available leader for South Vietnam." He actually was the *only* important American stooge in Vietnam and had strong U.S. economic interests and hopes behind him. Moreover he had already refused to be bound by the Geneva Accords in any way.

Both countries, France and the United States, remained deadlocked until February 11, 1955, when the terms (not the form) of the original Ely-Collins agreement were finally agreed upon during the "power vacuum" which, in Paris, followed Mendès France's resignation. Colonel Lansdale (CIA) got the direction of the key office in the military training mission in Saigon: "Operations." He first set out to help Diem liquidate the French-oriented sects, bringing in Northern Catholics instead. In May 1955, rather than break with the United States, French Premier Edgar Faure preferred to withdraw from Vietnam.

Although remnants of the French forces remained until April 1956, "France was out of Vietnam to all intents and purposes by May 1955, ten months after Geneva." Diem had then established his rule with almost unwavering American support, and "the anti-Communist moralism of Dulles and Diem rejected any rapprochement with the North, ultimately assuring that the temporary military demarcation line would become a permanent division of Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:211).

With American advisers, the war then resumed against the people of South Vietnam, in flagrant violation of the clauses of the Geneva agreements. Diem *had to* terrorize the people in order not to lose the elections, if any had to be held. Intense and quite permanent mopping-up operations and repression were to lead, in 1956, to the Southern Insurrection. The course of the American War was set.

Once decoded, and though the evidence they contain is quite scattered and rather difficult to gather and grasp by anyone not aware of what was at stake, the Pentagon Papers (Gravel edition) are helpful for clarification of the long process by which the United States became involved in the Vietnam war. As they show well, this involvement was not at all accidental, but the logical result of a determined and deliberate approach to Asia, with a precise view of what was meant by "the security of U.S. interests." Notwithstanding many gaps, the "thread of the story" is quite perceptible and the book reveals a lot about decisionmaking processes and approaches.

For the French, this first volume certainly makes sad reading; but it is also illuminating, especially on the nature of Franco-American relations during the Cold War era. It shows how U.S. policy was basically calculated to ensure the success of right-wing forces in France and enlist France in the anti-Soviet alliance in Europe. Indochina then was low on the priority list. At all times, since 1947, French and American policies in Europe as in Indochina were closely related. This alliance between Paris and Washington was decidedly a "right-wing Front," a "conservative solidarity," and in this respect the Papers give evidence of a real *conspiracy,* born in 1946/47, to crush the liberation movement in Indochina, destroy the newly emerged "free" and proud Republic of Vietnam, and reimpose upon its people a puppet government. This kind of conspiracy at Nuremberg was called "crime against peace."

It is not easy, even now, to determine which ideologies or interests kept France involved so long in a war in Indochina, nor is the tie-up between French and American private or public interests which led Washington to subscribe to the French goals and pay for 70 percent (in 1953) of France's war costs better understood. But what the Papers document well is the way the U.S. Republican Administration made this war its own war. Actually, when the French government late in 1953 changed its mind and decided to put an end, through negotiation, to what had been a folly, Washington decided to enter the scene and, later, to get rid of the French, to take over the immoral undertaking and to go alone with what was to become pure aggression.

Considering the sufferings imposed by the war upon the Vietnamese people, and the utter devastation of this old, serene and beautiful country, no French reader of this book will shut it without a deep and sad feeling: indeed, the colonial war was wrong, from the start, even if it developed later, through skillful maneuver, into an anti-Communist or Christian crusade; but probably worse has been, at the very moment when peace was near, the surrender of French responsibilities to those people who, in Vietnam as well as in America, rejected peace and thought only of revenge and victory.

Notes

1. In the letter of transmittal to Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford, Leslie Gelb wrote: "Because many of the documents in this period were lost or not kept (except for the Geneva conference era) we had to rely more on outside resources" (Gravel ed., I:xvi).

2. Mentioned in P. Devillers and J. Lacouture, *End of a War: Indochina 1954,* New York, Praeger, 1969, p. 12.

3. Joint Chiefs of Staff's memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, April 10, 1950 (Gravel ed., I:366).

4. The rationale is "If you are 'true nationalists,' you can't be inclined toward communism, and if you are a leftist, you can't be a 'true nationalist.' "

5. The Pentagon Papers ignore persistently the fact that the French and Bao Dai had agreed to set up a "provisional government of Vietnam" in May–June 1948. The position of Bao Dai, however, remained unsettled.

6. Gravel ed., I:87. A coalition government, Dulles thought, would be "the beginning of disaster" (Gravel ed., I:116).

7. The full text of NSC 5405 is published in the Papers as Document 20 (pp. 434–443). This sentence is "Point 29" (Gravel ed., I:442).

8. On the opening day of the conference at Geneva, Soviet officials had again approached American delegates on the subject of partition, averring that the establishment of "a buffer state to China's south would be sufficient satisfaction of China's security needs" (Gravel ed., I:134). The Department of Defense (on May 5) drew up a settlement plan that included provision for a territorial division. (This amounted to containing the Communist forces above the 20th Parellel, while denying them sovereign access to the sea. The Hanoi-Haiphong area would be held by Bao Dai.)

9. Gravel ed., I:117. The Erskine report had suggested "political action" to ensure a French agreement "with particular attention to possible *pressure against the French position in North Africa,* and in NATO" (Gravel ed., I:454; emphasis ours).

10. The Papers say "The Communist side was not so intransigent as to make agreement impossible" (Gravel ed., I:139).

11. Gravel ed., I:214. "It would be militarily disastrous to demand the withdrawal of French forces before the creation of a new national army," Dulles said.

11. The Pentagon Papers as Propaganda and as History*

by Noam Chomsky

Though in no sense a history of American involvement in Indochina, the Pentagon study adds many important details to the historical record. As a general assessment, it seems to me fair to say that it corroborates, with direct documentation, reasonable inferences that have been drawn in the most critical literature on the war.[1] The Pentagon historians do, at times, try to distinguish the evidence that they present from the conclusions in the critical literature, but unsuccessfully. As an example, consider the crucial question of the origins of the insurgency in South Vietnam (1954–1960). The director of the study, Leslie Gelb, has a long analytic summary in which he takes some pains to demonstrate that critics of the war have been in error in crucial respects, adding that "few Administration critics have had access to the classified information upon which [these] judgments are based" (Gravel edition, I:260).[2] Gelb claims to provide a substantial correction in his discussion of the May 1959 meeting of the Central Committee of the DRV Lao Dong Party (Fifteenth Plenum), which he regards (citing Communist sources) as "the point of departure for DRV intervention," when a decision was taken "actively to seek the overthrow of Diem" (Gravel ed., I:264, 260).

Turning to the critics, Gelb asserts that "Most attacks on U.S. policy have been based on the proposition that the DRV move on the South came with manifest reluctance, and after massive U.S. intervention in 1961." As his sole example to support this assertion, he cites the following passages from Kahin and Lewis:

> Contrary to U.S. policy assumptions, all available evidence shows that the revival of the civil war in the South in 1958 was undertaken by Southerners at their own—not Hanoi's—initiative. . . . Insurrectionary activity against the Saigon government began in the South under Southern leadership not as a consequence of any dictate from Hanoi, but contrary to Hanoi's injunctions.[3]

Evidently, the quoted remarks are entirely irrelevant to the conclusion they are adduced to support. Neither in these remarks nor elsewhere do Kahin and Lewis state or imply that "the DRV move on the South came . . . after massive U.S. intervention in 1961." In fact, they cite a DRV statement of September 1960 as the first official "encouragement of militant tactics by the Southerners." In this public statement, according to Kahin and Lewis, the "Northern leadership [made] it clear that it sanctioned formation of a United Front and approved a program for the violent overthrow of the Diem government" (p. 115). As to the remarks Gelb quotes, he himself claims only that "Hanoi moved thereafter [i.e., *after*

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*This is part of a much longer study of the Pentagon Papers that will appear elsewhere.

1958] to capture the revolution" (Gravel ed., I:265). He gives no evidence to refute the contention that insurrectionary activity against the Saigon regime through 1958 was independent of Hanoi. The evidence presented in the Pentagon Papers in no way contradicts the passages he quotes, irrelevantly, from Kahin and Lewis.

A few pages earlier, Gelb attributes to "Critics of U.S. policy in Vietnam" the view that the DRV was "impelled to unleash the South Vietnamese" regroupees "only after it became clear, in late 1960 [*sic*], that the U.S. would commit massive resources to succor Diem in his internal war" (Gravel ed., I:251). French analysts, Gelb claims, "have long been advancing such interpretations," and he cites specifically Philippe Devillers, giving several long quotations from an article that appeared in 1962.[4] Apart from the fact that the U.S. commitment did not become clear in late 1960, Devillers says nothing of the sort, and the quotes Gelb cites are as irrelevant to the claim he is attempting to establish as those from Kahin and Lewis. Neither Devillers nor Kahin and Lewis put forth the view that Gelb is trying to refute, namely, that DRV moves to "capture the revolution" were a response to "massive U.S. intervention in 1961." They argue, rather, that "the insurrection is Southern rooted; it arose at Southern initiative in response to Southern demands," led initially by "Southern Vietminh veterans who felt betrayed by the Geneva Conference and abandoned by Hanoi," which, initially reluctant, "was then obliged to sanction the Southerners' actions or risk forfeiting all chance of influence over the course of events in South Vietnam" (Kahin and Lewis, p. 119). Their position can no doubt be challenged, and perhaps modified, on the basis of evidence that has since come to light, but the crucial point, in the present connection, is that they never so much as hint at the position that Gelb attempts to refute in his effort to distinguish the conclusions of the critical literature from the material unearthed by the Pentagon historians.

Gelb further notes that Diem was "entirely correct when he stated that his was a nation at war in early 1959" (Gravel ed., I:265). Pursuing the matter further, we discover that "early 1959" happens to be March 1959,[5] that is, two months prior to the meeting which Gelb takes to be "the point of departure for DRV intervention," when a decision was taken "actively to seek the overthrow of Diem" (Gravel ed., I:264, 260). Thus Gelb's account not only does not contradict the quoted passages from Kahin and Lewis, but actually supports them, when relevant details are made explicit.

There remains the interesting question whether Hanoi did "capture the revolution" after 1958, as Gelb evidently believes. The conclusion is not implausible on the basis of the little that is known, but the arguments that Gelb presents are hardly compelling, nor do they make the best case. Thus he argues that the rapid growth of the NLF "is a further indication that the Hanoi-directed communist party apparatus had been engaged to the fullest in the initial organization and subsequent development of the NLF" (Gravel ed., I:265). This is on a par with Douglas Pike's proof that the "master planner" of the NLF must have been Ho Chi Minh from the beginning, when it "sprang full-blown into existence and then was fleshed out" exploiting "grievances . . . developed or manufactured almost as a necessary afterthought." The proof is that the NLF "projected a social construction program of such scope and ambition that of necessity it must have been created in Hanoi and imported." [6] In the face of such powerful argumentation, one can only lapse into silence.

Notice further that Devillers, in the article cited, in fact refers to the May 1959 meeting—though Gelb does not mention this—stating that there was a debate over the issue of "effective support for Southern comrades," and that the tendency in favor of such support "had made itself felt in the field in the shape of the aid given at the beginning of 1960 to the *maquis*. . . ." Thus we see, still more clearly, that in this instance the Pentagon Papers add little of substance to the earlier conclusions of the critical literature, which Gelb misrepresents. Furthermore, access to classified information was not needed to determine the basic facts. Rather, as has generally been the case, inattention to the public record has obscured the facts. Gelb's speculations (they are no more than this) as to the initial DRV intervention do, as is noted, contradict the conclusion of P. J. Honey that Hanoi was committed to the Moscow line of peaceful coexistence until late 1960 (Gravel ed., I:261), but Honey, who is described as "a British expert" or "the British authority on North Vietnam," [7] is hardly one of those who direct "attacks on U.S. policy" in the sense Gelb intends.

Though Gelb fails entirely to engage the critical literature, nevertheless the issue that he raises is of interest in itself. His interpretation of the Fifteenth Plenum of May 1959 is somewhat different from Devillers', and though there is little relevant evidence in the Pentagon Papers, it is possible to pursue the issue using other sources. Gelb concludes that not later than spring 1959—i.e., at the Fifteenth Plenum—the DRV leaders made a clear decision "actively to seek the overthrow of Diem. Thereafter, the DRV pressed toward that goal by military force and by subversive aggression, both in Laos and in South Vietnam." The "principal strategic debate over this issue," he maintains, "took place between 1956 and 1958." He concedes that during this period "some DRV leaders" perhaps "did attempt to hold back southern rebels on the grounds that 'conditions' were not ripe for an uprising" (Gravel ed., I:260). In contrast, Devillers (in an article dated November 1961) held that the debate concerned possible "international complications likely to hinder the diplomacy of the Socialist camp," though some "activist" elements succeeded, in the May 1959 meeting, in setting in motion a program of aid for the Southern resistance. As to the hypothesis that the fighting in South Vietnam is directed from Hanoi, Devillers asserts that it "is certainly a plausible one," and he cites an article in the *Nhan Dan* of Hanoi as one of several that "make it seem very likely," but he remains cautious, noting, in particular, that "to formulate [the hypothesis of DRV control] serves the purposes of Communist propaganda." His point is that both the United States and the Vietnamese Communists have a stake (for different reasons) in establishing that the NLF is under the control of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Therefore, evidence on this matter from these sources must be treated critically.

We return to Gelb's discussion of alleged DRV resort to military force and subversive aggression, consequent to the May 1959 meeting. Let us consider first the other matter at issue, namely, the content and significance of the meeting. Available evidence is conflicting. Allan Goodman reports that "Vietcong who defected in 1961–1962, in part, gave as their reason for changing sides the reluctance of Hanoi to authorize anything beyond political action among the population." [8] In fact, surveys of Vietcong prisoners and defectors just prior to the American escalation of early 1965 found "most native South Vietnamese guerrillas unaware of any North Vietnamese role in the war, except as a valued ally" (and revealed, as well, that few considered themselves to be Communists, and that "persuasion and indoctrination" appeared to be the major devices used by the Vietcong, rather than "the authoritarianism of traditional armies," [9] confirming the general conclusion of even such a hostile observer as Douglas Pike—see also below, pp. 186, 187f.).

Jeffrey Race's very valuable study (see my note 6), on the other hand, supports Gelb's interpretation of the decision of the Fifteenth Plenum, while at the same time adding considerable depth of evidence to the (uncontested) view that the insurrection was well underway at that time and confirming the general interpretation of the origins of the insurgency given by Devillers and Kahin-Lewis. Race includes that "sometime around the middle of 1956 the Party made the decision to rebuild its apparatus in the South" (Race, p. 39). According to the highest ranking Party cadre Race was able to locate (captured in 1962), this was "a very dark period," given the realization that the Geneva Accords would not be implemented and that the Diem government, which had already severely damaged the underground apparatus (with ample use of terror) and was now turning to the countryside, might well consolidate its position. From 1956, the Party's political activity was carried out under the cover of the "Vietnamese People's Liberation Movement." Its programs appealed primarily, and with much success, to the demands for social justice that had been aroused by the Vietminh resistance, which (in Long An at least) had demonstrated to the peasantry that it was possible to overthrow the power of the local elite. This, Race argues, was the primary significance of the resistance (Race, p. 40). In the late 1950s, "the revolutionary organization [was] being ground down while the revolutionary potential was increasing," the reason for this "anomaly" being "the Central Committee's decision that, except in limited circumstances, violence would not be used, even in self-defense, against the increasing repressiveness of the government" (Race, p. 104).

This is the background of the May 1959 meeting in Hanoi. Though no record is available of its decisions, Race concludes from interviews and subsequent instructions that it "set forth a new line for the revolution in the South," with the "political struggle line" replaced by a decision to combine political and armed struggle, taken after a "sharp conflict within the Central Committee" (Race, p. 105). Although "the grievances on which the campaign was founded lay in the South, nevertheless the major strategic decisions were made by the Central Committee in Hanoi." He reports that the few high-level cadres in government hands are insistent on this point, and concludes that although Kahin and Lewis and Devillers were correct in emphasizing "the effect of the increasing repressiveness of the Diem regime in generating pressure for armed action in the South," evidence that has come to light since they wrote indicates that they tended to exaggerate the independence of the southern movement (Race, pp. 107–108; recall, however, Devillers' qualified statements).

The high-ranking captive mentioned earlier refers to the anger of southern Party members toward the Central Committee and their demand for armed action to preserve their existence in the face of the Diem repression of the former Vietminh (in explicit violation of the Geneva Agreements, it might be noted). The Fifteenth Plenum, he reports, decided to permit "the southern organization . . . to develop armed forces with the mission of supporting the political struggle line" (Race, pp. 110–111). Race believes that the reluctance of the Central Committee to authorize even armed self-defense during these years derived from the concern for internal problems in the North, Soviet pressure, and "a natural conflict between those making sacrifices at the front and those making policy decisions in the rear," who regarded the situation as not yet "ripe" (Race, p. 111). The southerners hesitated to undertake armed struggle for fear of violating the Party line, but after the May 1959 meeting they were no longer so constrained (Race, p. 113). From this point on, the threat of terror was "equalized," and violence was no longer a government monopoly. The Party quickly became the ruler in considerable areas of the province; by 1960, government forces in Long An province were collapsing without a shot being fired, undermined from within by Party propaganda, and the government apparatus quickly disappeared from the scene (Race, pp. 94–95, 116, 184ff.). The revolutionary potential had become reality.

Race describes the measures approved at the May 1959 meeting as "stopgap moves intended to catch up with events which had in fact overtaken the Party in the South." The September Party Congress cited by Kahin and Lewis (see above, p. 179) "definitively approved the new direction of Party policy in the South . . ." (Race, pp. 120–121). In late 1964 the situation had so deteriorated that a free strike zone was established in the northwestern part of the province and ten to fifteen thousand residents were moved by government decree (Race, pp. 135, 168). "By early 1965 revolutionary forces had gained victory in virtually all the rural areas of Long An" (Race, p. 140).

The analysts in the Pentagon study generally exhibit a commitment to the ideological underpinnings of U.S. policy and its specific aims. One refers to Marx, Mao and "French revolutionary romanticism" as "the most virulent, and vicious social theories of the era" (Gravel ed., I:333). The reader may rest assured that none of the analysts would be so irresponsible and emotional as to use such terms as "virulent" or "vicious" in discussing, say, American military tactics in South Vietnam, or the general policies and assumptions that brought them into "operational reality." For the most part, the bias of the analysts is not concealed—a virtue, not a defect, of the presentation.

In case after case, the analysts reiterate U.S. government claims as if they are established fact. Consider again Gelb's assertion that after the May 1959 meeting, with its decision "actively to seek the overthrow of Diem," "the DRV pressed toward that goal by military force and by subversive aggression, both in Laos and in South Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:260). Expanding on this claim, he states (Gravel ed., I:264) that "Within a month of the Fifteenth Plenum, the DRV began to commit its armed forces in Laos. . . ." No evidence is presented in the summary or elsewhere to demonstrate that the DRV sent its armed forces into Laos in June 1959, let alone that this was an outcome of the May meeting in Hanoi. The earliest claim that Viet Minh forces were involved in the fighting in Laos was a Royal Lao Government [RLG] report of July 29. No one, to my knowledge, holds that the Pathet Lao offensive of the summer of 1959 was a consequence of the meeting of May 1959 in Hanoi. As to the intervention of DRV armed forces, careful studies disagree, the general attitude being one of considerable skepticism. Hugh Toye concludes that the allegations were false.[10] Langer and Zasloff maintain that Laotian intelligence has evidence of North Vietnamese participation in the summer offensive.[11] They also note, as Gelb does not, that this offensive followed the American-backed civil-military takeover in Vientiane, the attempt to disarm Pathet Lao battalions in May 1959, and the arrest of sixteen leaders of the political arm of the Pathet Lao (among them, the delegates who had just been elected to the National Assembly in a left-wing victory that set off the U.S. effort at large-scale subversion in Laos).[12] In the most recent study to appear, Charles Stevenson takes the claim of North Vietnamese intervention to be unbsubstantiated, citing also Bernard Fall's skepticism. He concludes further that, contrary to U.S. government claims, "The initiation of the hostilities should be attributed to the [U.S.-backed] Phoui Sananikone government, as it was in a Rand corporation study a year later," not to the Pathet Lao, let alone the DRV.[13] If there was North Vietnamese involvement in the summer offensive, it was more likely a response to the events of May and the direct U.S. intervention[14] than a consequence of a Lao Dong Party decision to take over South Vietnam, as Gelb implies.

Gelb's comments on this matter are particularly surprising in the light of the documentation available to him. A SNIE of September 18, 1959 (*DOD,* book 10, 1244 ff.), concludes that "the initiation of Communist guerrilla warfare in Laos in mid-July was primarily a reaction to a series of actions by the Royal Lao Government which threatened drastically to weaken the Communist position in Laos," in particular, a reaction to the success of the new Laotian government, with increased U.S. backing, in blocking Communist efforts "to move by legal political competition toward its objective of gaining control of Laos." Intelligence estimated that the total number of guerrillas involved was about 1,500 to 2,000 at most. It believed "it is almost certain some [North Vietnamese] are involved in the guerrilla activity, particularly in coordination, communication, and advisory roles," though "we have no conclusive evidence." Even this assessment must be taken with a grain of skepticism at least, given the long-standing prejudice in the "intelligence community" with regard to "international communism" and its alleged responsibility for local initiatives everywhere in Indochina.

In short, it will hardly do to describe the situation in Laos in the summer of 1959 by stating, with not a word of additional background: "Within a month of the Fifteenth Plenum, the DRV began to commit its armed forces in Laos, and steadily escalated its aid to the Pathet Lao," pressing toward the goal of overthrowing Diem, established at the Fifteenth Plenum, by military force and subversive aggression.

Continuing with his discussion of consequences of the May 1959 meeting in Hanoi, Gelb states: "moreover, by that time [December 1960], the Soviet Union had entered the fray, and was participating in airlift operations from North Vietnam direct to Pathet Lao–NVA units in Laos." The remark does not quite do justice to the actual situation. The Soviet airlift, which began in December 1960, was in support of the pro-Western Souvanna Phouma and the neutralist Kong Le, whose government was under attack by right-wing troops backed by the CIA and U.S. military after a long period of well-documented American subversion. There is not a hint of this in Gelb's account, which conveys the impression of a Communist initiative to subvert Laotian independence, set in motion by the May 1959 meeting of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee in Hanoi, and by the end of 1960 involving also the Soviet Union. Gelb claims that "Both Soviet and Chinese policy seems to have bent to [Hanoi's] ends," namely, reunification and "Vietnamese hegemony in Southeast Asia" (Gravel ed., I:265). This is an amazing construction to found on the flimsy evidence that he presents, and when the factual gaps are filled, as in the cases just noted, his proposal seems little more than a flight of fancy. In any event, his references to Laos are hardly more than a repetition of U.S. government propaganda that is generally discounted even by highly sympathetic historians.

One further example, from a different part of the study, may suffice to illustrate the tendency to accept U.S. government claims uncritically unless they are conclusively refuted by the evidence at hand, often with neglect of evidence that is not in serious dispute. Consider the explanation of why the Wilson-Kosygin peace initiative failed during the Tet truce of February 1967. The reason, according to the analyst, is that "the enormous DRV resupply effort force[d] the President to resume the bombing . . ." (Gravel ed., IV:9, 139, 143). The careful reader will note that these alleged violations of the truce consisted only of "the massive North Vietnamese effort to move supplies into its southern panhandle" (Gravel ed., IV:143), that is, movement of supplies within North Vietnam. The U.S. Command issued no reports of traffic moving south of Dong Hoi, about forty miles north of the 17th parallel, and had no way of knowing whether the sighted convoys were supplying the millions of people in the southern panhandle who had been living under merciless bombardment.

Meanwhile, unremarked by the analyst, the United States was not only moving supplies westward toward California and across the Pacific, but was setting a one-day record on the first day of the truce for air-delivered cargo to units in the field. U.S. planes alone carried more than 7,000 tons of supplies and 17,000 men during the first three days of the cease-fire—within South Vietnam. Reporters described long files of trucks protected by tanks and helicopters hauling munitions to the outskirts of VC-controlled Zone C, though U.S. sources in Vietnam tried to conceal this fact in misleading dispatches. Immediately after the truce, Operation Junction City was launched against Zone C. According to AFP in *Le Monde*, the offensive had been prepared during the Tet truce. The U.S. press mentioned neither this matter, nor a Parliamentary debate in London inspired by the facts brought together by I. F. Stone.[15] The Pentagon conceded Stone's charges, with this amazing comment: "The point that Mr. Stone is missing is that we have air and naval supremacy and have no need of a truce of any kind to move supplies." Therefore, the onus falls entirely on North Vietnam for violating the truce by the unconscionable act of moving supplies within its own territory, thus forcing the President to resume bombing and dashing hopes for a negotiated settlement. Stone describes the whole incident as the government's most "successful Operation Brain Wash." No brains were washed more successfully than those of the Pentagon historian, who continued blithely to repeat government propaganda, oblivious to uncontested facts.[16]

However, though the analyst misrepresents the facts, he probably does accurately depict the perception of the facts in Washington. Chester Cooper, who was involved in the London negotiations at the time, reports that the President decided to renew the bombing despite the ongoing Wilson-Kosygin efforts: "The North Vietnamese troop movements over the past several days had apparently thrown Washington into panic." [17]

The incident is interesting not only as an illustration of the pro-government bias of the analyst, but also, once again, as an indication of the power of government propaganda to overwhelm the facts, given the general submissiveness of the mass media. It is easy to comprehend why statist ideologues complain so bitterly when the press begins to show some signs of intellectual independence.

A more subtle, and rather pervasive bias is well illustrated by other comments of Gelb's in the analytic summary cited above. He notes that "no direct links have been established between Hanoi and perpetrators of rural violence" in the 1956–1959 period (Gravel ed., I:243). By the phrase "perpetrators of rural violence," he does not refer to President Diem and his associates, who organized massive expeditions in 1956 to peaceful Communist-controlled regions killing hundreds, perhaps thousands of peasants and destroying whole villages by artillery bombardment,[18] nor to the "vengeful acts" of the South Vietnamese army in areas where the Vietminh had withdrawn after Geneva, "arbitrarily arresting, harassing, and torturing the population and even shooting the villagers." [19] In this regard, Gelb merely states that: "At least through 1957, Diem and his government enjoyed marked success with fairly sophisticated pacification programs in the countryside" (Gravel ed., I:254), though he concedes that Diem instituted "oppressive measures" such as the so-called "political reeducation centers" which "were in fact little more than concentration camps for the potential foes of the government" and a "Communist Denunciation Campaign" which "thoroughly terrified the Vietnamese peasants" (Gravel ed., I:253, 255). But he concludes that the Diem regime "compared favorably with other Asian governments of the same period in its respect for the person and property of citizens" (Gravel ed., I:253; in particular, for the property of the 2 percent of landowners who owned 45 percent of the land by 1960; Gravel ed., I:254). And phrases such as "perpetrators of rural violence" are, typically, restricted to the resistance in South Vietnam.

We learn a little more about Diem's sophisticated pacification programs in the countryside from the accompanying historical analysis. "In early 1955, ARVN units were sent to establish the GVN in the Camau Peninsula. . . . Poorly led, ill-trained, and heavy-handed, the troops behaved towards the people very much as the Viet Minh had led the farmers to expect" (Gravel ed., I:306; the Camau experience, the analyst adds, was "more typical of the ARVN than the Binh Dinh affair," which "went off more smoothly" and, he claims, revealed popular hostility to the Vietminh). In interrogations of prisoners and defectors, the analyst reports, most "spoke of terror, brutality and torture by GVN rural officials in carrying out the Communist Denunciation campaigns, and of the arrest and slaying of thousands of old comrades from the 'resistance'" (Gravel ed., I:329). They also "spoke of making person-to-person persuasion to bring in new members for the movement, relying mainly on two appeals: nationalism and social justice." The analyst concludes that many were not "dedicated communists in the doctrinaire sense," that "the Viet Minh were widely admired throughout the South as national heroes," and that "the GVN created by its rural policy a climate of moral indignation which energized the peasants politically, turned them against the government, sustained the Viet Cong, and permitted 'communists' to outlast severe GVN repressions and even to recruit during it" (Gravel ed., I:329–330). Thus the unqualified anti-Vietminh campaign of the GVN was "a tactical error of the first magnitude."

Race reaches some rather similar conclusions in his far more detailed study. Until 1959, the government had a near monopoly on violence and by employing it, succeeded in demonstrating to the population that there was no alternative to violence. The Party maintained an official policy of nonviolence, with the exception of the "extermination of traitors" policy undertaken in response to government terror in order to protect the existence of the Party. Although abstention from violence in the face of mounting government terror cost the Party dearly, the policy helped create the "revolutionary potential" that quickly turned the tide when the Central Committee rescinded its prohibition against armed struggle, and "the threat was equalized for both sides" (Race, pp. 184, 82–84, 113 ff.). Much the same was true in subsequent years: ". . . the government terrorized far more than did the revolutionary movement—for example, by liquidations of former Vietminh by artillery and ground attacks on 'communist villages,' and by roundups of 'communist sympathizers.' Yet it was just these tactics that led to the constantly increasing strength of the revolutionary movement in Long An from 1960 to 1965" (Race, p. 197).

The fundamental source of strength for the revolutionary movement was the appeal of its constructive programs, for example, the land program, which "achieved a far broader distribution of land than did the government program, and without the killing and terror which is associated in the minds of Western readers with communist practices in land reform" (Race, p. 166; in this case too, "the principal violence was brought about not by the Party but by the government, in its attempts to reinstall the landlords"). The lowest economic strata benefited the most from the redistributive policies of the Party. Authority was decentralized and placed in the hands of local people, in contrast to the rule of the GVN, perceived (accurately) as "outside forces" by major segments of the local population (Race, p. 169 ff.); "what attracted people to the revolutionary movement was that it represented a new society in which there would be an individual *redistribution* of values, including power and status as well as material possessions" (Race, p. 176). "The Party leadership . . . structured its forces so that they were inextricably bound into the social fabric of rural communities by ties of family, friendship, and common interest" (Race, p. 177). Thus forces were of local origin, locally supplied, and oriented toward local interests.

Returning to Gelb's quite typical form of expression, something is surely overlooked when the local cadres are portrayed simply as "perpetrators of rural violence."

The same summary and analysis (Gravel ed., I:242–269) gives a remarkable interpretation of the post-Geneva period. In Gelb's view, the United States and the GVN, though not "fully cooperative," nevertheless "considered themselves constrained by the Accords" and did not "deliberately . . . breach the peace." [20] "In contrast, the DRV proceeded to mobilize its total societal resources scarcely without pause from the day the peace was signed, as though to substantiate the declaration" of Pham Van Dong that "We shall achieve unity" (Gravel ed., I:250). Thus by mobilizing its total societal resources for social and economic reconstruction, the DRV clearly demonstrated its intent to upset the Accords, "in contrast" to the peace-loving GVN and United States, who were merely maintaining the *status quo* as established at Geneva. The DRV could have demonstrated its sincerity only by succumbing to the famine that appeared imminent in 1954, refraining from programs of economic development, and permitting the United States to succeed in its efforts to undermine it.[21]

Gelb believes that "it is possible . . . to accept the view that through 1958 the DRV still accorded priority to butter over guns, as part of its base development strategy," namely, the strategy of making the North "a large rear echelon of our army," "the revolutionary base for the whole country," in General Giap's words of January 1960 (Gravel ed., I:263–264). But these priorities changed, Gelb believes, at the May 1959 meeting. Comparing Gelb's remarks with the facts that he cites, we might say, with somewhat greater precision, that the facts permit no interpretation other than the view he finds it possible to accept, namely, that the DRV through 1958 accorded priority to butter over guns (and, as he notes, Honey, as well as others, believe this to be the case through 1960). The claim that this concern for internal development through 1958 was nothing other than a part of the "base development strategy" is supported by no particle of evidence. It is, presumably, a logical possibility at least that the North Vietnamese leadership was interested in economic development for reasons other than "as part of its base development strategy," just as it is possible to imagine that the mobilization of "total societal resources" for internal development might have some explanation other than the intention to disrupt the Geneva agreements. But these alternative possibilities arise only on the assumption that the Vietminh leadership had some concern for the welfare of the Vietnamese people, and it would appear that this hypothesis is excluded by the canons of neutral scholarship.

In fact, Gelb's logic is rather like that of Dean Acheson when he declared in 1950 that recognition of Ho Chi Minh by China and the USSR "should remove any illusion as to the nationalist character of Ho Chi Minh's aims and reveals Ho in his true colors as the mortal enemy of native independence in Vietnam" (Gravel ed., I:51). To Acheson, apparently, Ho could prove his nationalist credentials only by capitulating to the French, who were defending liberty and national independence in Vietnam against the assault of the Vietminh.

There is hardly a page of this summary and analysis section that is not misleading or inaccurate in some respect. To cite one final example, consider Gelb's remark that the refugees from the North after the Geneva settlement "provided the world the earliest convincing evidence of the undemocratic and oppressive nature of North Vietnam's regime . . . the refugees were the most convincing support for Diem's argument that free elections were impossible in the DRV" (Gravel ed., I:248). One may argue that the DRV regime was undemocratic and oppressive and that elections conducted there would not be free, but it is patently absurd to point to the flight of the refugees as "convincing evidence" for these judgments. It would be rational to argue that the flight of the refugees indicated a fear that the regime would be undemocratic and oppressive—to argue, in the analyst's phrase, that "The flight from North Vietnam reflected apprehension over the coming to power of the Viet Minh" (Gravel ed., I:291). Even this statement is misleading unless it is also noted that many of the predominantly Catholic refugees had been French collaborators and had even been mobilized in "an autonomous Vietnamese militia against the Vietminh." [22] Would Gelb argue that the flight of Loyalists to Canada provided the world with the earliest convincing evidence of the undemocratic and oppressive nature of George Washington's regime, and showed that free elections were impossible in the United States? [23]

The analytic summary of the post-Geneva period is unusual in the degree of misrepresentation, and contrasts unfavorably with other summaries, some of which are quite perceptive. As to the reasons for this, one can only speculate. The summary seeks to establish that the United States and GVN accepted the Geneva settlement more or less in good faith, and that blame for disrupting the peaceful *status quo* in Laos and South Vietnam lies primarily with the DRV (and its Russian ally, drawn in by Hanoi). From it, a reader who knows nothing of events in Indochina or of the critical literature (and who does not note the disparity between what is alleged to be true of the critical literature and what is actually quoted) might draw the conclusion that critics of the war are misguided in their "attacks on U.S. policy." Rather, they should be directing attacks on the DRV and its allies and should support the U.S. "reaction" to the aggression from the North. The U.S. government White Papers of 1961 and 1965 quite explicitly attempted to demonstrate just this.

Gelb's misrepresentation of the views of critics of the war also serves the ends of government propaganda in a slightly more subtle way. In the view of the critics, DRV intervention was a response to a situation that developed in the South. In Gelb's revision of their views, the contention is that the DRV intervention was a response to U.S. intervention. The critics focused attention on internal Vietnamese affairs. Gelb reformulates their argument, shifting the focus to an interaction between the United States and the DRV. Whatever may have been on his mind, the fact is that this move is typical of U.S. government propaganda, which seeks to show that the people of the South are victims of aggression from the North, with the United States coming to their defense. In this framework, the interaction between the United States and North Vietnam is the central element in the conflict, not the internal situation in South Vietnam. Within this framework, it is natural that the Pentagon Papers should contain a detailed study of the bombing of the North, while scarcely mentioning the far heavier and more destructive bombardment of South Vietnam which was initiated on a regular basis at about the same time. The government has half won the argument if critics accept its framework and then debate the timing of the U.S.-DRV interaction, neglecting the Southern insurgency.[24] It is interesting, therefore, that Gelb recasts the argument of the critics within the framework of government propaganda, eliminating the central concern with the Southern insurgency (though the reader can detect it from the quotes he cites) and placing U.S.-DRV interaction in the foreground. Had the critics formulated their position in his terms, they would have tacitly conceded a significant part of the government's case.

In this connection, four points might be mentioned. In the first place, as has already been shown, Gelb's account is shot through with misrepresentation. Secondly, it is striking that these distortions are so excessive in a discussion of the "origins of the insurgency in South Vietnam" (the chapter title), a question that might be regarded as crucial for determining one's attitude toward "massive U.S. intervention in 1961." Thirdly, Gelb claims only that information that appeared long after the events supports the interpretation he proposes. A rational person will evaluate an action in the light of evidence available to those who carried it out. A murderer is no less guilty if later evidence reveals that without his knowledge his victim was just about to commit some horrible crime. Finally, a critic of the American intervention who bases his criticism on the principle that the United States has no unique right to engage in forceful intervention in the internal affairs of others, or who simply believes that the U.S. executive should be bound by established law, would in no way be swayed from his condemnation of the U.S. intervention of 1961 even if it had been shown that the facts were as Gelb presents them, and were known to the U.S. executive at the time. Since this is clear from the critical literature that Gelb misrepresents, and from earlier discussion here, I will pursue this matter no further at this point.

When the Pentagon study appeared there was loud protest that it was biased, misleading, a chorus of doves, etc. In a sense, this is correct. The analysts do in general seem to believe that the U.S. involvement in Vietnam may well have been a costly error. At the same time, they tend to accept uncritically the framework of official ideology, and rarely question government assertions. As the term has been used in American political discourse, they are doves, by and large.

The work of the analysts must be understood as a distillation of the documentary record that they were studying—they claim little more than this—and it is not therefore surprising that the implicit assumptions in this record are generally carried over into their work. With this limitation, the analyses are often excellent, intelligent, and highly illuminating. There is also some variety in the character of the analyses, difficult to discuss in view of the way the work was done and the anonymity of the presentation—one cannot know, for example, to what extent a particular section was the work of a single author. See Leslie Gelb's introductory "Letter of transmittal" for such information as there is. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that this material was not prepared for publication. Undoubtedly it would have been revised and corrected, had it been intended for publication. Finally, footnotes are missing, and it is therefore impossible to know what qualifications and further comments they might contain. The general bias of the analysts must, however, be appreciated by anyone who hopes to make serious use of this material. Disinterested scholarship on contemporary affairs is something of an illusion, though it is not unusual for a commitment to the dominant ideology to be mistaken for "neutrality." Such naïveté is apparent, not infrequently, in these analyses, though no more so than in most professional work.[25] Nevertheless, no reader will fail to learn a good deal about the U.S. involvement, and the attitudes and goals that underlie it, from a careful reading of the analyses and the documentation on which they are based.

To cite a small example, it was not generally known that North Vietnamese villages were apparently bombed and strafed by T-28s on the eve of the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964, or that Thai pilots under direct U.S. command were shot down over the DRV two weeks later, though the Pathet Lao had provided evidence, generally disregarded in the West, that Thai pilots were taking part in the bombing of Laos.[26] Given the timing, the facts are of some interest.

Consider a more important example: the escalation of the war in Laos in 1964.[27] It is claimed by U.S. officials that the American involvement in an expanding war in Laos in 1964 was in response to North Vietnamese aggression. Evidence to support this interpretation of events is slim,[28] but it is a fact that North Vietnamese soldiers entered Laos in February 1964. A report of the ICC "notes with interest" that the complaint of October 1964 from the Royal Lao Government is the first since the reconvening of the Commission in 1961 reporting the capture of prisoners "alleged to have been North Vietnamese." A few days prior to the RLG complaint of October, the Pathet Lao had notified the ICC that U.S. aircraft had attacked Laotian territory and parachuted South Vietnamese soldiers into Laos. Apart from the fact that three soldiers were reported captured (two identified by name), the Pathet Lao charge is plausible, given that three years earlier (October 1961) President Kennedy had directed that the United States "initiate guerrilla ground action, including the use of U.S. advisers if necessary," in Southern Laos, seven months after he had instructed that "we make every possible effort to launch guerrilla operations in Viet-Minh territory at the earliest possible time" (Gravel ed., III:140). In May 1961, an interdepartmental task force proposed extensive covert operations in Southern Laos, approved by the President (Gravel ed., II:641–642; III:140; see also my note 33). These operations were perhaps called off after the Geneva agreements of 1962, though the United States continued to supply guerrillas operating behind Pathet Lao lines and by mid-1963 had reportedly begun to reintroduce CIA military advisers.[29] In mid-November 1963 the CIA reported "first results just coming in" from a new series of cross-border operations into Laos (Gravel ed., III:141).

The ICC investigation confirmed the charge concerning the North Vietnamese soldiers, who entered Laos in February. The most convincing evidence of direct North Vietnamese involvement presented by Langer and Zasloff is the testimony of a North Vietnamese defector, who had been a Pathet Lao battalion adviser.[30] He was given a month's leave in late January 1964 before undertaking a new (unspecified) assignment, but was suddenly notified on February 5 to report to Headquarters to accept an assignment, as he then learned, as a military adviser to the 408th Pathet Lao Battalion, which operated along the borders of China. He entered Laos sometime after February 18, from China. He reports having met an NVA battalion in North Vietnam near the Chinese border on February 12, also headed for Laos.

Why should the DRV have infiltrated advisers (and possibly troops) into Northern Laos in February 1964? The Pentagon Papers suggest a possible answer. In late 1963 plans were laid for a significant escalation of the war, and on February 1, the covert operations of the U.S.-GVN in Laos and North

Vietnam were stepped up considerably and placed under direct American command in Saigon. It is not unlikely that the plans were known to the North Vietnamese even before, given the generally porous character of the Saigon Administration and military. The purpose of this much expanded program of sabotage, kidnapping, commando raids and psychological warfare was to indicate to the DRV the depth of American commitment to the achievement of its war aims, specifically, surrender of the Pathet Lao and the NLF and the establishment of non-Communist governments in Laos and South Vietnam. Basing himself on material obtained prior to the publication of the Pentagon Papers, Anthony Austin states correctly that February 1, 1964, must "go down as one of the key dates of the American involvement." These covert operations, involving Vietnamese and foreign mercenaries (Chinese nationalists, European adventurers, and possibly some Thais),[31] had "the primary motive . . . to convey a message to Hanoi: 'We are changing the rules. You no longer have a sanctuary. The war is entering a new phase.' "[32] The official purpose of these and related operations was to "warn and harass North Vietnam and to reduce enemy capabilities to utilize the Lao Panhandle for reinforcing the Viet Cong in South Vietnam and to cope with PL/VM pressures in Laos" (Gravel ed., III:606).

The covert program initiated on February 1 was "spawned" in May of 1963,[33] approved by the Joint Chiefs on September 9, and finally approved by the President on January 16. This "elaborate program of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam" (Gravel ed., III:149) was a significant expansion of CIA efforts from 1961 to organize resistance and sabotage in North Vietnam. It was very different in scale and concept from earlier programs. "A firebreak had been crossed" (Gravel ed., III:106). Quite possibly, the DRV received the "signal" that was so deliberately sent, and appreciated that "by early February 1964, the United States had committed itself to a policy of attempting to improve the situations in South Vietnam and Laos by subjecting North Vietnam to increasing levels of direct pressure" (Gravel ed., III:152). The DRV perhaps concluded, reasonably enough, that Laos might be used as a base for an attack on North Vietnam—as indeed proved to be the case, shortly after, with the establishment of radar posts to guide American bombers near the Laos-DRV border.[34] North Vietnamese spokesmen have stated exactly this; for an example, see *At War with Asia*, p. 233, presented there without comment, though I would now be inclined to say that the remark is quite credible. They may then have decided to respond to the threat by protecting their Western borders.[35]

All of this is interesting. The U.S. Executive has justified its clandestine operations in Laos on grounds of alleged North Vietnamese aggression. The case has never been strong. The information released in the Pentagon study weakens it still further.

It was immediately obvious that the Pentagon Papers presented decisive evidence of U.S.-initiated escalation in late 1963 and early 1964, leading directly to the expanded war in later years. Immediately upon the publication of the Pentagon Papers, the U.S. Mission in Vietnam released the text of a "captured North Vietnamese political directive" of December 1963 which, the Mission claims, "was the formal authorization for increasing North Viet-Nam's military presence in the South in 1964 and the years which followed."[36] According to the Mission, the period after Diem's fall "seemed to Hanoi an opportune time to attempt the military conquest of the South," and this Resolution of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party, December 1963, presents "the decision which raised the civil war in South Viet-Nam, where both government and insurgents had been receiving external assistance, to the level of an international conflict"—a decision "made in Hanoi in December, 1963." The timing suggests that the release of the document was an effort to counter the evidence presented in the Pentagon Papers that the decision to escalate was made in Washington, but the document is (assuming its authenticity) no less interesting for that reason.[37]

According to a report by Arthur Dommen, this document discloses that "The Hanoi government had decided upon escalation of the war in South Vietnam more than a year before the Johnson Administration committed combat troops to the conflict." [38] The document reveals, he claims, that shortly after Diem's overthrow Hanoi "decided . . . on a step-up of the fighting in South Vietnam, using their own army if necessary." This "appears to constitute the most authoritative proof from the hand of Hanoi's leaders themselves that they were planning a big war in South Vietnam long before American forces began to take an active part in the conflict," and had it been known to U.S. intelligence, it could have been used by the Administration in 1964 to explain U.S. involvement as a response to North Vietnamese aggression. Dommen gives a few quotations from the document, which, however, do not substantiate his assertions.

The document itself says nothing about a decision to use North Vietnamese troops in the South or even about covert North Vietnamese operations in the South (analogous, say, to those that the CIA had been conducting for many years in the North and that were sharply escalated on February 1, 1964). It speaks of the "struggle of the South Vietnamese people against the United States for national independence," which is at the same time a class struggle waged by SVN workers and peasants against "feudalist landowners" and "pro-U.S. bourgeois compradors." The document discusses the "successes of our Southern compatriots" and the "achievements of the South Vietnamese people" who now "show themselves capable of beating the enemy in any situation." "The South Vietnamese people is one half of the heroic people" of Vietnam; they wage a revolutionary war, exploiting their political and moral strength to combat the material and military superiority of the enemy. "The war waged by the people in South VN is a protracted one because we are a small people having to fight an imperialist ringleader which is the U.S.A." "The general guideline for our people's revolutionary war in SVN is to conduct a protracted war, relying mainly on our own forces . . ."; ". . . the revolutionary people in SVN must promote a spirit of self-reliance." With a proper "emphasis on self-reliance and coordination between political struggle and armed struggle . . . the SVN people . . . have achieved many great victories." But "the people in the South must not only have a big and strong political force but a big and strong military force as well." Therefore, concerted political and military efforts must be made in the mountainous, rural, and urban areas, "to motivate the people and ethnic-minority groups . . . to participate in our political struggle," to wage protracted war, to prepare for a General Uprising. "The South Vietnamese people's war" will succeed, and the Party "will lead the South Vietnamese Revolution to final victory."

There is further discussion of the military and political tactics that "the South Vietnamese people must adopt": annihilation tactics, helping the people, increasing production, mobilizing military forces, protecting the material and cultural life of the people, heightening the sense of self-reliance, developing democracy and trusting the masses. "Revolution is a creative achievement of the masses"; "To win or to lose the war depends on many factors, but the basic one is man." "We must develop democracy to promote the subjective activism" of the people. "We should bring democracy into full play in political and armed struggles," and learn from the experiences of the people, eliminating "commandism," "detachment from the masses," etc.

The "SVN Revolutionary Armed Forces" must be constructed in accordance with the same "fundamental principles . . . applied for the building up the Vietnamese People's Army," with main force, local force, and militia guerrilla force "under the absolute leadership of the Party." "This army is not only a combat army, but also an action and production army," as is necessary in a struggle in which the political and social component is central. The "all-people, all-sided war" must be expanded "Even if the U.S. imperialists bring fifty to a hundred thousand additional troops to SVN."

After thirty-nine pages in this vein, there is a two-page statement of "The Mission of North Vietnam." It begins as follows:

> To fulfill the above-mentioned mission, not only the Party and people in the South must make outstanding efforts but the Party and people in the North must make outstanding efforts as well. The role of the two "mien" [parts: North and South Vietnam] in the revolutionary undertaking of the country, as defined by the Party's third National Congress [September 1960], is unchanged, however it is time for the North to increase aid to the South, the North must bring into fuller play its role as the revolutionary base for the whole nation.

"We should plan to aid the South to meet the requirements of the Revolution," to encourage our people in the North to work harder to "increase our economic and defensive strength in North Viet-Nam" and "to be ready to fulfill their obligation toward the southern Revolution under any form and in any circumstance" (for example, say, if the outright U.S. invasion with 50 to 100,000 troops takes place). The Party must "direct the revolution in the South"; "we must coordinate with concerned branches of service in the North in order to better serve the revolution in the South." Following the anti-French war, "the revolutionary struggle of our Southern compatriots has been going on for almost the last ten years . . . the entire Party, the entire people from North to South must have full determination and make outstanding efforts to bring success to the revolution of our Southern compatriots and achieve peace and unification of the country, to win total victory, to build a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, prosperous and strong Viet-Nam."

In short, the document states that the people of North Vietnam must be prepared to aid the popular revolutionary struggle being conducted, in a spirit of self-reliance, by their Southern compatriots, the other half of the Vietnamese people. One need not turn to captured documents to read such exhortations. English-language publications from Hanoi commonly refer to "the great support of the Northern people for the struggle against U.S. aggression of the Southern kith and kin." The English text of the Third Congress (1960) Resolution published in Hanoi speaks of the two tasks of the Vietnamese Revolution: "to carry out the socialist revolution in the North" and "to liberate the South from the rule of the American imperialists and their henchmen, achieve national reunification and complete independence and freedom throughout the country." See also the public statement of General Giap in January 1960 cited above (p. 187). The U.S. government White Paper of 1965 cites many other public statements of the same sort in its rather pathetic effort to demonstrate North Vietnamese aggression. In later years, there is frequent reference to the 1967 statement of Ho

Chi Minh that "Viet Nam is one, the Vietnamese people are one, and no one can encroach upon this sacred right of our people . . . [to] . . . independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Viet Nam." [39] The captured document released by the U.S. mission is also typical in its reference to the struggle conducted by the South Vietnamese people in a spirit of self-reliance, with aid from the North, and with the goal of eventual reunification (cf. the Constitution of the GVN); and in its emphasis on the central importance of the political and social struggle, which of course can only be conducted by indigenous forces, in the face of the military superiority of the United States and the Vietnamese armed forces it has established. It might be noted that the GVN constitution contains one non-amendable Article, namely Article 1, which states that "Vietnam is an independent, unified and territorially indivisible Republic," thus extending from China to the Camau Peninsula.

One must assume that the U.S. mission has done its best to support the conclusion it announced in the introduction to this document, a conclusion duly repeated by a sympathetic reporter, but not founded on the actual text. If so, the case that the United States is unilaterally responsible for escalation of the war in 1964 seems to be demonstrated beyond serious question. Incidentally, if the war in the South was a "civil war" prior to this point, as the U.S. Mission states, then the direct engagement of U.S. military forces in combat from 1961, and the CIA–Special Forces covert operations throughout Indochina, were surely in violation of the UN Charter, which grants an outside power no right to engage in combat in a civil war.

It has repeatedly been argued that the interpretation of the Indochina war is biased against the United States because we have no access to internal DRV documents. The statement is at best misleading. In fact, the U.S. government has been selectively releasing "captured documents" [40] for years on a significant scale in an effort to buttress its case, whereas internal U.S. documents, prior to the publication of the Pentagon study, have been available only when leaked by the U.S. Executive or in memoirs of its former members. The DRV and the NLF, of course, do not capture and selectively release U.S. government documents. Therefore it would be more accurate to state that in the past, internal documents have, for the most part, been selected by the U.S. Executive for public release, for its own purposes, from both U.S. and Vietnamese sources. Nevertheless, the record both prior to and with the publication of the Pentagon study would seem to leave little doubt as to who is responsible for the successive stages of escalation, quite apart from the respective rights of the U.S. government and contending Vietnamese to carry out military and political actions in Vietnam.

In the same connection, the Pentagon Papers add valuable documentation with regard to the commitment of North Vietnamese troops to South Vietnam. Over the past few years there has been a running debate about this matter. The documentary record previously available had indicated that regular North Vietnamese units were first identified in April 1965.[41] However, some pro-government spokesmen have repeatedly claimed in public discussion that the U.S. government knew that regular units of the North Vietnamese army (NVA, PAVN) were operating in the South even before the November election of 1964, but chose not to reveal this fact for domestic political reasons. (Why the Pentagon should have maintained this deception through 1965 and 1966 remains a mystery, under this theory.) Joseph Alsop asserts (with no cited evidence) that "In 1965, when President Johnson intervened on the ground, Hanoi had two North Vietnamese divisions 'in country' "—that is, "on the order of 28,000 of Hanoi's troops." [42] The date of U.S. ground intervention would be sometime between February 26, when the deployment of combat marines was approved (March 8 "was the first time that U.S. ground combat units had been committed to action"), and June 27, when U.S. forces took part in their first search-and-destroy operation into Viet Cong base areas (Gravel ed., III:390, 417, 461).

The published documents reveal exactly what Washington believed to be the case duing this period. The first reference to regular North Vietnamese units is in a CIA-DIA memorandum of April 21, 1965, which "reflected the acceptance into the enemy order of battle of one regiment of the 325th PAVN Division said to be located in [Northwestern] Kontum province."[41] Of the various signs of deterioration noted, this was the "most ominous," "a sobering harbinger of things to come." Westmoreland, on June 7, informed CINCPAC that "Some PAVN forces have entered SVN" (Gravel ed., III:438), and on June 13, reported that the PAVN 325th Division "may be deployed in Kontum, Pleiku and Phu Bon" (Gravel ed., IV:607). An NVA regiment "reportedly" overran a district headquarters in Kontum Province on June 25 (Gravel ed., II:473; the earliest such report in this particular record).

Apparently, these reports were not too persuasive. On July 2, 1965, a memorandum from McNaughton to General Goodpaster reports: "I am quite concerned about the increasing probability that there are regular PAVN forces either in the II Corps area [the area of the previous reports] or in Laos directly across the border from II Corps" (Gravel ed., IV:291, 277).

On July 14, the Joint Chiefs included one regiment of the 325th PAVN Division in their estimate of 48,500 "Viet Cong organized combat units" (Gravel ed., IV:295). An intelligence estimate (SNIE) of July 23 predicted that if the United States increased its strength in SVN to 175,000 by November 1, then in order to offset this increase, the Communists would probably introduce a PAVN force totaling 20,000 to 30,000 by the end of 1965 (Gravel ed., III:484–485; this, the analyst adds, "they were already in the process of doing"). The absence of any considerable number of PAVN troops was reflected in the "Concept for Vietnam" presented on August 27, which specified as the major military tasks: "To cause the DRV to cease its direction and support of the Viet Cong insurgency," while defeating the Viet Cong and deterring Communist China (Gravel ed., IV:300).

For comparison, note that on April 21, 1965, McNamara reported that 33,500 U.S. troops were already in-country, in addition to 2,000 Koreans who had been dispatched on January 8, 1965 (Gravel ed., III:706, 139). He reported the unanimous recommendation of the Honolulu meeting of April 20 that U.S. forces be raised to 82,000, supplemented with 7,250 Korean and Australian troops. The analyst concludes that by the time of the Honolulu meeting, "we were inexorably committed to a military resolution of the insurgency" since "The problem seemed no longer soluble by any other means" (Gravel ed., III:105)—the day before the "ominous" CIA-DIA report. By June, the United States decided "to pour U.S. troops into the country as fast as they could be deployed" (Gravel ed., II:362). On July 1, the day before McNaughton expressed his concern over the possibility that PAVN forces might intervene, planned U.S. deployments were 85,000 troops (Gravel ed., III:473). In mid-July, when the JCS were estimating one PAVN regiment in South Vietnam, the President approved the request that the U.S. troop level be raised to 175,000 in 1965, with estimated U.S. killed-in-action of 500 per month, and another 100,000 recommended for 1966 (Gravel ed., III:396, 416; IV:297, 299). Recall that April 1965 was two months after the initiation of regular and intensive bombing of North and South Vietnam, eight months after the bombing of strategic targets in North Vietnam in "retaliation" for the Tonkin incident, and fourteen months after the escalation of military pressure against the North on February 1, 1964.[44] Recall also that the U.S. troop level reached 23,000 by the end of 1964 (Gravel ed., II:160), and that the U.S. military had been directly engaged in combat operations for three years, at that point.

The record is clear, then, that when the United States undertook the February escalation, it knew of no regular North Vietnamese units in South Vietnam, and that five months later, while implementing the plan to deploy 85,000 troops,[45] the Pentagon was still speculating about the possibility that there might be PAVN forces in or near South Vietnam. In the light of these facts, the discussion of whether the U.S. was defending South Vietnam from an "armed attack" from the North—the official U.S. government position—is ludicrous.

The most striking feature of the historical record, as presented in the Pentagon study, is its remarkable continuity. I have noted several examples already, but perhaps the most significant has to do with the political premises of the four Administrations covered in the record. Never was there the slightest deviation from the principle that a non-Communist regime must be imposed, regardless of popular sentiment. True, the scope of the principle was narrowed when it was finally conceded, by about 1960, that North Vietnam was "lost." Apart from that, the principle was maintained without equivocation. Given this principle, the strength of the Vietnamese resistance, the military power available to the United States, and the lack of effective constraints, one can deduce, with almost mathematical precision, the strategy of annihilation that was gradually undertaken.

In May 1949, Acheson informed U.S. officials in Saigon and Paris that "no effort should be spared" to assure the success of the Bao Dai government (which, he added, would be recognized by the United States when circumstances permit), since there appeared to be "no other alternative to estab[lishment] Commie pattern Vietnam." He further urged that the Bao Dai government should be "truly representative even to extent including outstanding non-Commie leaders now supporting Ho." [46] Of course Acheson was aware that Ho Chi Minh had "captured control of the nationalist movement," that he was "the strongest and perhaps the ablest figure in Indochina and that any suggested solution which excludes him is an expedient of uncertain outcome." [47] But to Acheson, Ho's popularity was of no greater moment than his nationalist credentials.[48]

In May 1967, McNaughton and McNamara presented a memorandum that the analyst takes to imply a significant reorientation of policy, away from the early emphasis on military victory and toward a more limited and conciliatory posture. McNaughton suggested that the United States emphasize "that the sole U.S. objective in Vietnam has been and is to permit the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future." Accordingly, the Saigon government should be encouraged "to reach an accommodation with the non-Communist South Vietnamese who are under the VC banner; to accept them as members of an opposition political party, and, if necessary, to accept their individual participation in the national government." [49] This is precisely Acheson's proposal of eighteen years earlier (restricted, now, to South Vietnam).

The final words of the Pentagon Papers analysis describe a new policy, undertaken after the Tet offensive of 1968 had shattered the old: "American forces would remain in South Vietnam to prevent defeat of the Government by Communist forces and to provide a shield behind which that Government could rally, become effective, and win the support of its people" (Gravel, ed., IV:604). Again, the same assumption: the United States must provide the military force to enable a non-Communist regime, despite its political weakness, corruption and injustice, somehow to manage to stabilize itself. Nowhere is there the slightest deviation from this fundamental commitment.[50] The same policy remains in force today, despite tactical modifications.[51]

Small wonder, then, that many Vietnamese saw the United States as the inheritors of French colonialism. The analyst cites studies of peasant attitudes demonstrating "that for many, the struggle which began in 1945 against colonialism continued uninterrupted throughout Diem's regime: in 1954, the foes of nationalists were transformed from France and Bao Dai, to Diem and the U.S. . . . but the issues at stake never changed" (Gravel ed., I:295; see also I:252). Correspondingly, the Pentagon considered its problem to be to "deter the Viet Cong (formerly called Viet Minh)" (May 1959; *DOD*, book 10, 11860; also Gravel ed., II:409). Diem himself, on occasion, seems to have taken a rather similar position. Speaking to the departing French troops on April 28, 1956, he pledged that "your forces, who have fought to defend honor and freedom, will find in us worthy successors." [52] General Minh in January 1964 warned of the "colonial flavor to the whole pacification effort." The French, in their "worst and clumsiest days," never went into villages or districts as the Americans were about to do. Note the date. In response to Lodge's argument that most of the teams were Vietnamese, General Minh pointed out that "they are considered the same as Vietnamese who worked for the Japanese." The U.S. reaction was to reject Minh's proposals as "an unacceptable rearward step" and to extend the adviser system even below "sector and battalion level" (Gravel ed., II:307–308). A year and a half later, it was quite appropriate for William Bundy to wonder whether people in the countryside, who already may be tempted to regard the Americans as the successors to the French, might not "flock to the VC banner" after the full-scale U.S. invasion then being planned (Gravel ed., IV:611).

The Thieu regime today has a power base remarkably like Diem's, perhaps even narrower.[53] By now, substantial segments of the urban intelligentsia—"the people who count," as Lodge put it (Gravel ed., II:738)—regard U.S. intervention as blatant imperialism. Of course, one may argue that the popular mood counts for less than in former years, now that the United States has succeeded, partially at least, in "grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass" (Robert Komer in Gravel ed., IV:420).

Notes

1. Cf. F. Schurmann, P. D. Scott and R. Zelnick, *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam*, Fawcett, 1966; E. S. Herman and R. B. Du Boff, *America's Vietnam Policy*, Public Affairs Press, 1966; and many later works.

2. The "Letter of Transmittal" identifies Gelb as the author of the summary and analysis sections (Gravel ed., I:xvi). References, unless otherwise indicated, are to the *Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers*, Beacon, 1971. References to the Government offset edition of the Pentagon Papers (*United States–Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Government Printing Office, 1971) are identified as *DOD*.

3. George McT. Kahin and John Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, Dial, 1967, pp. 119–120. I give here the original, which is slightly different, but in no material way, from the quotation as Gelb cites it.

4. Philippe Devillers, "The struggle for unification of Vietnam," *The China Quarterly*, January–March 1962, reprinted in M. E. Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions*, Fawcett, 1965.

5. Devillers, *op. cit.*, citing an interview with Diem in *Figaro*. The analyst later cites an article by George Carver of the CIA who states that *"By the end of 1958* the participants in this incipient insurgency . . . constituted a serious threat to South Viet Nam's political stability" (Gravel ed., I:335; emphasis his).

6. Cited by the analyst, Gravel ed., I:345–346. The quotations are from Pike's *Viet Cong*, MIT, 1966, p. 76, and give a fair indication of the general level of his analysis, though the book is useful for the documentation it contains. For a serious discussion of the origins of the NLF see Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An*, Univ. of California, 1972.

7. Honey is an extreme anti-Communist whose fanaticism on the subject leads him to outlandish statements. See my *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Pantheon, 1969, p. 290, for examples. While Honey is described merely as an authority or an expert, Burchett is identified as "the Communist journalist Wilfred Burchette" (*sic;* Gravel ed., IV:207, 151).

8. "Diplomatic and strategic outcomes of the conflict," in Walter Isard, ed., *Vietnam: Issues and Alternatives*, Schenkman Publishing Company, Cambridge, 1969.

9. *New York Times*, June 7, 1965; cited in *American Power and the New Mandarins*, chapter 3, note 49.

10. *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground*, Oxford, 1968, pp. 127 ff., 139, 149. A UN Commission was unable to substantiate charges by the Lao government that there was a North Vietnamese invasion. Arthur Dommen maintains that "the fact that the subcommittee did *not* report that there were no North Vietnamese troops in Laos is significant" (*Conflict in Laos*, revised edition, Praeger, 1971, p. 124), but is unwilling to go beyond that.

11. *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao*, Harvard, 1970, pp. 68–69. This book is an attempt to make the case for North Vietnamese control of the Pathet Lao. I have discussed it, in its earlier incarnation as a RAND report, in my *At War with Asia*, Pantheon, 1970, chapter 4, along with other RAND reports by these authors.

12. For background, in addition to the references cited earlier, see J. Mirsky and S. E. Stonefield, "The United States in Laos, 1945–1962," in E. Friedman and M. Selden, eds., *America's Asia*, Pantheon, 1970.

13. Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy Toward Laos since 1954*, Beacon, 1972, p. 73.

14. Barely noted in the Pentagon Papers. *DOD* book 10 contains some relevant documents. For example, an intelligence analysis of December 1958 indicates that the NLHS (the political arm of the Pathet Lao) "appears to be making strong gains in almost every sector of Laotian society" after the electoral victory (*DOD* 1172), and an NSC report a few weeks later mentions the introduction of U.S. military officers "in civilian clothing" (*DOD* 1165; January 1959; both facts commonly noted elsewhere). In an appendix, Stevenson reviews the Pentagon Papers documentation with reference to Laos. See also Jonathan Mirsky, "High Drama in Foggy Bottom," *Saturday Review*, January 1, 1972, for comment on this matter.

15. *I. F. Stone's Weekly*, February 27 and March 6, 1967, from which the information given here is taken. Much of his evidence derives from reporting by Raymond Coffey, one of the small group of U.S. correspondents who, over the years, refused to be fooled.

16. The *New York Times* edition of the Pentagon Papers (Bantam, 1971, p. 525) repeats President Johnson's claim that the renewed bombing was a response to the "unparalleled magnitude of the North Vietnamese supply effort," mentioning none of the facts just cited, though the *Times* had carried some of this information. See "Vietnam Cease-Fire Ends without Sign of Extension," Special to the *New York Times*, datelined Saigon, February 12, which cites reports from correspondents in the provinces north and northwest of Saigon that "the highways were much more crowded than usual with United States convoys," and also notes that U.S. military officers confirmed "that

they were moving extraordinary amounts of food, fuel and ammunition to forward positions."

17. *The Lost Crusade,* Dodd, Mead, 1970, p. 362.

18. Joseph Buttinger, *Neues Forum,* Vienna, 1966, cited by E. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam,* Pilgrim Press, 1970, p. 22.

19. M. Maneli, *The War of the Vanquished,* Harper, 1971, p. 32, referring to the findings of the ICC. Maneli was the legal and political adviser to the Polish delegation of the ICC at the time, and is strongly anti-Communist.

20. The actual U.S.-GVN attitude toward the Geneva settlement is revealed not only by the rejection of the central elections provision—contrary to Gelb, the most severe violation of the *status quo* established at Geneva—but also by the violent repression of the Vietminh. Article 14c of the Accords protects individuals and organizations from reprisal or discrimination on account of their activities during the hostilities. The repression of the anti-French resistance not only reveals the U.S.-GVN attitude toward the Geneva Accords, but also exhibits quite clearly the character of the new regime.

21. See Gravel ed., I:573 ff. NSC 5429/2, August 20, 1954, immediately after Geneva, urged "covert operations on a large and effective scale" in support of such policies as "mak[ing] more difficult the control by the Viet Minh of North Vietnam" (*DOD,* book 10, p. 737).

The behavior of France after Geneva was, incidentally, almost as deplorable as that of the DRV: "French insistence on strict legal interpretation of the Geneva Accords was one example of accommodation thinking" (Gravel ed., I:221; analyst). There were others, hardly less insidious.

22. Kahin and Lewis, *op. cit.,* p. 74, referring to the bishoprics of Phat Diem and Bui Chu, which, according to Bernard Fall, "packed up lock, stock, and barrel, from the bishops to almost the last village priest and faithful" (*The Two Viet-Nams,* revised edition, Praeger, 1964, p. 154). For accuracy one should also add Fall's observation that an extremely intensive and well-conducted American psychological warfare operation was a major factor in the mass flight.

23. What is at issue is the logic of Gelb's argument and the significance of the facts he omits, not an impossible comparison of historically very different revolutions.

24. Critics of the war sometimes fall into this trap. For an example, see my discussion of Telford Taylor's important book *Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy,* Quadrangle Books, 1970, in "The rule of force in international affairs," *Yale Law Journal,* June 1971.

25. To cite an example, selected virtually at random, consider this remark by a reviewer in the *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, January 1972, p. 244: "Since De Caux is an unreconstructed radical, he makes no pretense of objectivity." How often does one come across the statement: "Since *X* is an unreconstructed liberal (or conservative, or adherent of capitalist democracy), he makes no pretense of objectivity"?

26. One was captured on August 18, the same day that Hanoi claimed to have shot down a Thai pilot over DRV territory according to the document confirming the DRV reports (Gravel ed., III:609). See Gareth Porter, "After Geneva: Subverting Laotian Neutrality," in N. S. Adams and A. W. McCoy, *Laos: War and Revolution,* Harper, 1970, p. 201.

27. These remarks are expanded from my article on the Pentagon Papers in *American Report,* July 2, 1971. Similar points are discussed by T. D. Allman, *Far Eastern Economic Review,* July 3, 1971.

28. What is available is reviewed in *At War with Asia,* chapter 4.

29. See Porter, *op. cit.* Arthur Dommen suggests that the Meo guerrillas, "sitting astride the natural communication route between Vientiane and the NLHS base area in Sam Neua," may have hampered communication sufficiently to have caused deterioration of the well-developed NLHS infrastructure in Vientiane Province (*op. cit.,* p. 308). He does not go on to point out, as Porter does, that U.S. support for the guerrillas constituted a very serious violation of the Geneva Agreements, from the outset, and a major factor in the renewal of conflict.

30. Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *The North Vietnamese Military Adviser in Laos,* RM-5688, RAND Corporation, July 1968. Cf. *At War with Asia,* pp. 230 ff., for summary and discussion. The ICC report noted above states that the earlier Pathet Lao complaint is discussed "in a separate message." The British government has so far released only the report investigating the RLG complaint. Perhaps this is another example of the "continuing support for your policy over Vietnam" voiced by Prime Minister Wilson when informed about the impending attack on North Vietnamese petroleum facilities (despite his "reservations about this operation" [Gravel ed., IV: 102]).

31. Fred Branfman estimates that by 1970 the U.S. had brought at least 10,000 Asians into Laos as mercenaries, in comparison with the perhaps 5,000 North Vietnamese engaged in combat ("Presidential War in Laos, 1964–1970," in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.,* 266, 278 ff., where the basis for the latter figure is discussed). Lansdale's report of July 1961 (Gravel ed., II:643 ff.) describes some of the early stages of these operations. The White Star Mobile Training Teams, consisting of U.S. Special Forces personnel, which were introduced into Laos covertly in the last few weeks of the Eisenhower Administration (Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 185), or perhaps in 1959 (Porter, *op. cit.,* p. 183) "had the purpose and effect of establishing U.S. control over foreign forces" (Gravel ed., II:464). Laos was serving as a model for Vietnam, in this and other instances.

32. Austin, *The President's War,* 1971, pp. 229–230.

33. Gravel ed., III:150. The chronology on p. 117 states that on May 11, 1963, CIA-sponsored covert operations against NVN were "authorized," but this appears to be an error, apparently referring to NSAM 52 of 11 May 1961.

34. According to official testimony in the Symington Subcommittee Hearings on Laos, the radar installation at Phou Pha Thi, near the DRV border, was constructed in 1966. T. D. Allman cites "reliable American sources" who give the date as late 1964. Cf. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 310.

35. Admiral Felt (CINCPAC) had warned of just this possibility more than two years before (Gravel ed., II:83).

36. Introduction to Document No. 96, "The Viet-Nam Worker's Party's 1963 Decision to Escalate the War in the South," American Embassy, Saigon, July 1971. I am indebted to Arthur Dommen for providing me with a copy. The title, of course, is given by the U.S. Mission.

37. The timing of the "discovery" of captured documents has, more than once, been slightly suspicious. For example, shortly after the exposure of the My Lai massacre a document was "discovered" that had been mysteriously mislaid for a year and a half "purporting to boast that at least 2,748 persons were 'eliminated' " in Hue during the Tet offensive (Fred Emery, London *Times,* November 27, 1969; the document was reportedly found in April 1968 but had been "overlooked").

38. Boston *Globe*–L.A. *Times,* June 30, 1971.

39. Cf. *An Outline History of the Vietnam Worker's Party,* Hanoi, 1970, pp. 123, 181–182, 136; and elsewhere, repeatedly.

40. Obviously, a question arises as to the authenticity of the documents. We know that U.S. inntelligence has been planting forged Vietnamese documents since 1954 (Gravel ed., I:579). See my note 37.

41. The first careful study of this matter is T. Draper's *Abuse of Power,* which is also useful for its revealing analysis of the internal contradictions in the U.S. government accounts, in particular, the remarkable statements of Dean Rusk.

42. Boston *Globe,* October 19, 1971.

43. Gravel ed., III:438. This reference is said to have confirmed a report of February 1965. In the appended chronology, the analyst states that "As of late 1964 the supply of repatriated southerners infiltrated back from NVN had dried up and NVN volunteers were coming down the trail" (Gravel ed., III:410). There is no inconsistency. The distinction is between individual soldiers coming down the trail and regular units in military operations. Public Pentagon reports, Chester Cooper's report (*op cit.*), and Senator Mansfield, refer to one battalion, rather than one regiment, in

April–May. The analyst refers to the "confirmed presence" in the South of at least one battalion" in April 1965 (Gravel ed., III:392).

44. Roger Hilsman claims that in summer 1965 it was learned that at least one battalion of North Vietnamese regulars had entered the South by February 1965. There is no record of this in the Pentagon Papers. "Two American Counterstrategies to Guerrilla Warfare," in Tang Tsou, ed., *China in Crisis,* vol. 2, Chicago, 1968, note 9, p. 294–295. On p. 293 he states inconsistently that fear of bombing "had deterred Hanoi from infiltrating any of their 250,000 regular North Vietnamese troops into South Vietnam." He also states that there were fewer infiltrators in 1964 than in 1962. This is interesting. The analyst remarks that the judgments of "rise and change in the nature of infiltration" in August 1964 may have been influenced by the fact that they were expected, in reaction to the "Tonkin reprisals," and that evidence of greatly increased infiltration from the North was an explicit condition for "systematic military action against DRV," which leading officials were beginning to regard as "inevitable" (Gravel ed., III:192).

45. The French, following a more classical imperial pattern, relied primarily on mercenaries rather than French nationals, and never sent conscripts to Vietnam. There were about 20,000 French nationals fighting in all Indochina in February 1949, about 51,000 (plus 6,000 advisers) in all Indochina as of April 1953 (*DOD,* book 8, p. 179; Gravel ed., I:400). Of course, French firepower was a tiny fraction of that available to U.S. forces.

46. *DOD,* book 8, 190–191. Characteristically, he added that this appeared to be the only way to safeguard Vietnam from "aggressive designs Commie Chi[na]."

47. *Ibid.,* 145, 148, State Dept. Policy Statement of September 1948.

48. *Ibid.,* 196, May 1949: "Question whether Ho as much nationalist as Commie is irrelevant." He is an "outright Commie," and that is all that matters.

49. Gravel ed., IV:488–489. He also points out once again (487) that in the Delta, with 40 percent of the population, the VC effort is primarily indigenous and the North Vietnamese main force units play almost no role (though U.S. combat forces were operating). Still, he is able to say that our objective is to permit the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future. On reports of NVA forces in the Delta, see *At War with Asia,* pp. 99–100.

50. It might be added that the policy later called "Vietnamization" was recommended in mid-1967 by systems analysis; Gravel ed., IV:459, 467; cf. also 558, option (4); 564.

51. My reasons for believing this are presented in articles in *Ramparts,* April, May, 1972. See also Gabriel Kolko, "The Nixon Administration's strategy in Indochina—1972," Paris World Assembly, February 1972.

52. Cited from AFP, in *South Vietnam: Realities and Prospects, Vietnamese Studies,* no. 18/19, Hanoi, 1968, p. 27.

53. See Peter King, "The Political Balance in Saigon," *Pacific Affairs,* fall 1971, for a detailed analysis. Also Gareth Porter, "The Diemist restoration," *Commonweal,* July 11, 1969.

12. The Rise and Fall of "Counterinsurgency": 1961–1964

by David G. Marr

John F. Kennedy came to the White House in early 1961 on only the slimmest of pluralities. Yet he had taken the measure of the public, beyond party affiliations, and judged it to be deeply troubled by the Sputnik diplomacy of the Soviet Union and painfully eager for reassertion of the American Dream throughout the world. The myth of a monolithic international Communist conspiracy directed against a pristine Free World continued to energize millions.

Ngo Dinh Diem was Vietnamese anticommunism incarnate. He had helped repress the Indochinese Communist party in the 1930s. His elder brother had been killed by the Viet-Minh in 1945. With American assistance he had mounted a massive propaganda campaign in 1954 to persuade the Catholic minority of north and north-central Vietnam that the Holy Virgin Mary was leaving for Saigon, and that those who failed to follow her would be ruthlessly exterminated by the victorious Viet-Minh. Then, from 1956 onward, he had himself proceeded to kill or incarcerate tens of thousands of South Vietnamese as suspected Communists.

Three confrontations preoccupied President Kennedy during his first year in office: Cuba, Berlin and Laos. In Cuba, the Bay of Pigs fiasco gave the entire Kennedy Administration a touchy inferiority complex, which often led it to be more combative elsewhere. Berlin, however, could not be settled on American terms without risk of nuclear holocaust. And Laos was a tormented, confusing mudhole. The United States, it was said by mid-1961, would be lucky to stave off complete Communist victory in Laos with some sort of internationally sanctioned neutralist coalition, no matter how shaky.

This sort of thinking led the Kennedy Administration to fix its eyes more and more on South Vietnam. There, despite massive increments of U.S. military and economic assistance, Ngo Dinh Diem was again facing millions of South Vietnamese who openly denied the legitimacy of his regime. Whatever the realities of the situation, Diem clearly regarded the new National Liberation Front, founded in December 1960, as a mere appendage thrust at him by his real Communist enemies—Nikita Khrushchev, Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh. He was very upset by evident U.S. unwillingness to attack forcefully in Laos, and he badgered every American he met with quotations from Khrushchev's January 1961 speech on Soviet support for wars of national liberation.

Diem need not have bothered. Cold War warriors like Rostow, Rusk, Taylor, Lansdale and McNamara were all on the same wavelength. As the Laos negotiations dragged on through the summer and fall of 1961, the Kennedy Administration made deadly serious plans to "draw the line" in South Vietnam. Similarly to China in the late 1940s, the United States would try to do the impossible

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—"save" a country from its own people.[1] Inevitably this was phrased in terms of preventing a Communist sweep of not only South Vietnam, but of all mainland Southeast Asia and perhaps the entire western Pacific.[2]

The great hope of the Kennedy Administration in Vietnam was counterinsurgency. As with most theories, this quickly came to mean different things to different people. Nevertheless, as counterinsurgency was in fact applied in South Vietnam, it bore striking resemblances to nineteenth-century French techniques going by the title of "pacification," or for that matter, earlier tactics used by Vietnamese monarchs to suppress peasant rebellions.[3]

From the very beginning, counterinsurgency in Vietnam emphasized military considerations over political ones, enforcement of "physical security" over more subtle questions of social change or psychological loyalties. In short, it was blatant counterrevolution over revolution, although few Americans involved at the time seemed prepared to acknowledge this.

As a young U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer I learned these things slowly, more or less from the ground floor working upward. Sent to the Monterey Army Language School in 1961 to study Vietnamese, for example, I soon discovered that almost all of the vocabulary was military and, worse yet, Vietnamese instructors were being forced to coin entirely new words to conform with a set of technical English terms prescribed for all thirty-four languages taught at the school. Not surprisingly, when tried out in Vietnam such words received nothing but blank stares, and were promptly forgotten.

More seriously, as the only Vietnamese-speaking American among 550 marines making up the first marine helicopter squadron sent to Vietnam by President Kennedy, I was surprised to discover that my immediate superiors were only interested in classical combat intelligence, not the "new" counterinsurgency variables taught by Thompson, Trager, Lansdale, Fall or Valeriano. My colonel simply wanted to know if "the enemy" was located in village "A" or village "B," whether he had weapons larger than 30 caliber that would force us to fly above 1,500 feet,[4] and what the weather was going to be like tomorrow. The colonel cared not a wink about the political "infrastructure," the relationship of the "insurgents" to the local population, or the social program and essential motivations of the NLF.

In August 1962 we had a key role in one of the first division-size search-and-destroy operations conducted by the Saigon army. Code-named "Binh Tay" (Pacify the West), the objective was to break up several elite NLF battalions and to scare the local populace into submission with a massive display of helicopters, fighter-bombers, armored personnel carriers and gunboats. As might have been predicted, however, the NLF saw what was happening several days in advance and quickly moved into inaccessible mangrove forests or broke into small teams, hid their weapons, and blended with the villagers for the duration of the operation. Once the aircraft, armored vehicles and trucks left the area—leaving behind smoking villages, plowed-up rice fields, and several hundred dead citizens—the NLF battalions resumed their operations with more success and public support than before. A report that I filed up the U.S. Marine chain-of-command, strongly critical of this approach to counterinsurgency, received no attention whatsoever.[5]

While my superior officers on the one hand thus showed no interest in the political subtleties of the conflict, on the other hand they did many things of a political nature that played right into the hands of the NLF. For example, helicopters were sent almost every day to several fortified Catholic communities in the area, laden with a shopping list ranging from barbed wire to beer. These were militantly anti-Communist refugees from the North, in a surrounding sea of antagonized Buddhists, Hoa Hao and ethnic Cambodians, and their only reliable means of supply were our U.S. helicopters. In another incident, taking place after our squadron had been switched with a U.S. Army squadron and sent to Da-Nang, reckless marine drivers ran over several innocent Vietnamese pedestrians. The marine colonel in command alienated not only the local townspeople, but also the Vietnamese police investigators by deciding unilaterally to spirit the offenders out of the country, on the grounds that a court case would "damage their military careers." Another colonel flew in a piano and a stereo set for his favorite Vietnamese girl friend, and provided her family with the lucrative fresh vegetable and garbage contracts for the marine base. Yet when the mayor of Da-Nang proposed that rampant prostitution be handled by concentrating it in one large, inspected whorehouse for Americans, the colonels all protested that the merest whiff in U.S. Capitol corridors of such an arrangement would cost them their careers. While in retrospect each of these incidents may appear minor, particularly when compared with American-perpetrated outrages after 1965, it is important to see how things really got started, and why many ordinary Vietnamese had reason to hate the United States long before the first combat battalions set foot on their soil.

Reassigned to the U.S. Pacific command headquarters in Hawaii in mid-1963, it was a revelation for me to discover that not only the colonels, but also the generals and admirals were fundamentally bored by the political complexities of Vietnam. After the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem, in November 1963, I thought it particularly important to try to brief them on all the changes taking place, on each of the new faces showing up. Soon my feelings were hurt, however, when they cut my regular political analysis in half, a mere five minutes out of a one-hour briefing. Whenever they had no choice but to mention the name of a Vietnamese personality, they would resort to nicknames such as "Big" and "Little" Minh, the "Dragon Lady" (Madame Nhu), and "Colonel Yankee." [6]

Later, in a major marine training exercise on Molokai Island, I tried to incorporate some rudimentary political elements into a rather standard intelligence scenario. But the commander of the attacking blue forces, the "good guys" of the operation, simply ignored those aspects and marched his forces from one ridgeline to the next in classic Korean War fashion. Back at headquarters in Honolulu, I got into an intense argument with my intelligence contemporaries over which had to come first in counterinsurgency, physical security of the populace against "guerrilla terrorism," or fundamental political and social changes that would make the government legitimate and security a more manageable problem.

When I left the Marine Corps in June 1964 it was already obvious that enforcement of physical security—convenient rhetoric for violent repression—had become the overwhelming theme in counterinsurgency. At the time it seemed to me a clear case of stupidity, due to our lack of knowledge of the particular historical situation in Vietnam, and perhaps too our more general insensitivity toward the problems of nonwhite peoples in the world. Since then I have come to the realization that neither more knowledge nor more sensitivity would have changed U.S. policy much, assuming that our overall strategic objective of defeating communism in Vietnam remained the same.

Grim anticommunism, aimed at combating a supposedly grim, monolithic communism, made any serious, high-level consideration of the history, culture and political dynamics of Vietnam essentially irrelevant. If the *real* enemies were in Moscow and Peking, and the local people were mere pawns in a giant power play, then what did it matter that local Communists had led the mass victorious anticolonial struggle in Vietnam, or that the NLF was more popular than the Saigon regime? To a certain extent, American policymakers knew, or at least sensed, that they were working from a position of real political weakness in South Vietnam. Yet they went ahead anyway, and developed all sorts of financial, military and technocratic gimmicks to try to compensate. When it was perceived, in late 1964 or early 1965, that all these measures had failed, it became necessary to take more drastic steps that had been implicit all along: bombing the North and throwing in U.S. combat troops. Meanwhile, many of the practices developed in the 1961–1964 period continued, but with a ruthlessness that made a mockery of any political program put forth by either the U.S. or Saigon. The original Eisenhower phrase, "winning hearts and minds," had been reduced in the field to an acronym—WHAM—and ironically this brought out the true content of counterinsurgency.

The complete ascendancy of repressive military tactics and thinking during the counterinsurgency phase had many other implications. First of all, it almost always led to sublime overconfidence. General Lansdale, who had helped establish Diem and might have known how frail the system really was, wrote policy papers for President Kennedy in early 1961 that exuded optimism and recommended simply a little more muscle for the Saigon army (ARVN) and some minor bureaucratic reshuffling (Gravel edition, II:23–27, 52–53). Since NLF strength was usually viewed in terms of a certain number of soldiers and weapons, not as a mass revolutionary movement, it is hardly surprising that U.S. military contingency planners consistently underestimated the number of troops and amounts of money needed to defeat the enemy.[7]

Paradoxically, each new increment of American military technology in Vietnam represented an unwitting admission of counterinsurgency failure, and indeed further served to nail the lid on the coffin. Our glistening helicopter squadrons, such sources of pride and expectation among the generals, were a prime example. "The sky is a highway without roadblocks," rhapsodized Senator Henry Jackson in 1963 after careful briefings from his Pentagon cronies. "The helicopter," he continued, "frees the government forces from dependence on the poor road system and the canals which are the usual arteries of communication." [8] However, such mobility bore a very serious, if hidden pricetag. Since about 80 percent of the people of Vietnam happened to live along those "usual arteries," and since the helicopter could never hope to tie in all or most of the villages on a day-to-day basis, increased air travel tended inevitably to draw the Saigon regime ever further away from the humdrum realities of creating political and social credibility at the local level. As the American crews and ARVN soldiers floated blithely across the monsoon clouds, swooping down occasionally to wreak destruction or supply an isolated blockhouse, the NLF went ahead patiently to expand its organization along the roads and canals, gradually surrounding the district and provincial towns. When it finally became evident to U.S. military planners that helicopters were not stopping the enemy, it was natural they would miss or ignore the real reasons and choose instead to escalate the technology with fighter-bombers, gunships, and—eventually—B-52s, that penultimate weapon of mass, indiscriminate terror.

But generals were not the only ones subject to grave miscalculation. Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara thought that a combination of Vietnamese draft reform, stepped up mobilization and streamlining of the ARVN command structure would be enough to turn the tide.[9] Sir Robert Thompson proposed to combine "clear and hold" operations with the most stringent police measures, out of which grew the ambitious and abortive strategic hamlet program (Gravel ed., II:139–140).[10] Even Roger Hilsman, who perhaps spoke up more often than most on the NLF as a political rather than military threat, still accepted the argument that physical security was an essential prerequisite to his pet "civic action" programs (Gravel ed., II:142).

Behind such security fixations lay several *a priori* judgments on the Vietnamese people and Vietnamese society. It was usually assumed, for example, that the Vietnamese peasants worried only about where their next bowl of rice was coming from. They had little interest in affairs beyond their home village. Their ideal was to be "left alone." Unlike more advanced Westerners, it was said, Vietnamese peasants found little meaning or value in political ideology, except perhaps some archaic Confucian maxims. Those accepting Communist ideology had been duped or coerced, or perhaps attracted by promises of bigger rice bowls. In short, with neither the desire nor capability for profound national identifications, the peasants were mere "reeds in the wind," and would lean whichever way the guns were pointed. It thus followed that the outside elite with the best techniques of organized violence would inevitably triumph. From physical security all else flowed.

Needless to say, the French colonials had harbored such patronizing, racist ideas about the Vietnamese peasantry long before American counterinsurgency specialists picked them up. At Dien Bien Phu and scores of lesser-known battlefields, the French paid with their lives for their prejudices, simply refusing to believe that hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese peasants would fight and die, willingly, for a cause beyond themselves. American specialists like Lansdale, Trager and Pike never got this message, or if they did, they blanked it out in favor of a neater, less disturbing Communist/anti-Communist dynamic.[11]

In somewhat similar fashion, *all* Vietnamese, including the educated elites, were expected by American policymakers to respond in fairly obvious fashion to U.S. applications of pleasure or pain. From Walt Rostow in Washington, with his programs of graduated terror against Hanoi, to U.S. privates in the field, tossing chewing gum to scurrying Vietnamese children, Pavlovian carrot-and-stick reasoning held complete sway.[12] Once in a while even the canine aspect of Pavlov's model peeked through, as when Rostow recommended that we tell Moscow to "use its influence with Ho Chi Minh to call his dogs off, mind his business, and feed his people." [13]

When Vietnamese failed to salivate on schedule, the inevitable U.S. reaction was to escalate the increments of pleasure and pain. Sometimes our own Saigon clients were the least predictable, as in August 1963 when Diem and his brother Nhu ignored intense American pressures and proceeded to raid the Buddhist pagodas.[14] In the end, Diem and Nhu became so angry and cynical about American attitudes and activities that they put out vague feelers to Ho Chi Minh and the NLF. This was a deadly mistake on their part, however, since we only valued them for their militant antipathy to the Communists. The United States ended up having the old dogs killed and picking some new ones to work on.

The entire relationship between U.S. master and Vietnamese client deserves some exploration here, since it was an integral part of each counterinsurgency scheme in the period 1961–1964, and since the basic arrangement existing today really solidified by no later than June 1965. American military and government personnel, particularly those with extensive field experience in Vietnam, have often vehemently denied the whole master-client relationship, citing numerous factual examples where South Vietnamese "counterparts" ignored or even rejected their "advice." On the other hand, most critics of U.S. involvement have developed an image whereby an all-powerful American puppeteer simply pulled the strings on an otherwise inert Saigon puppet. And certain events can be cited to buttress this position too—for example, the overthrow of Diem, the dumping of General Duong Van Minh three months later, and the strong anticoup protection given Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu after mid-1965.

However, neither position is completely accurate. First of all, the U.S.-Saigon relationship changed perceptively over time. In 1954–1956 the U.S. was very deeply involved in selecting Diem, pushing him ahead of all French candidates, and then giving him the necessary money, guns and political protection to crush each opposition element, one by one. During the next four years, nevertheless, the United States stepped back from day-to-day management and allowed Diem to handle matters in more or less his own way, confident of course that his staunch anticommunism was the best servant of our interests.

But by late 1961 Diem's position, and that of the entire Saigon regime, was clearly eroding away. President Kennedy reacted by sending in not only the armed U.S. helicopter squadrons, mentioned previously, but also modern prop-jet transports, logistical support groups, and numerous overt and covert intelligence teams. Equally significant was the shift in missions for U.S. advisory elements already in place. From late 1961 onward, there was to be "U.S. participation in the direction and control of GVN military operations," and on the civilian side U.S. personnel were briefed for "insertion into the Governmental machinery of South Viet-Nam." [15] Although it was to be several years before such arrangements were put in writing with the Saigon regime, in fact a parallel U.S. hierarchy had been established and came to assume progressively more power as the political and military situation continued to deteriorate inside South Vietnam.

An interesting case of how the system developed and operated is in intelligence and counterintelligence. By 1961 American officials could see that the South Vietnamese regime was not getting reliable information at village and district levels. And since there was a jumble of separate intelligence agencies, sometimes conflicting with each other, what little information the regime did acquire was not being handled properly. In Quang Tri province, for example, I found that while the seven district chiefs passed their data and captured NLF suspects to the Secret Police (Cong An), the latter refused to let the military Sector Commander's S-2 (intelligence officer) see any of it or interrogate the prisoners. The Secret Police also kept a tight hold over their personality files, which were heavy on former Viet-Minh activists. However—and this is the important part—the Secret Police *did* grudgingly allow the American provincial adviser the access that they denied to the Sector Commander, so that the American served increasingly as an informed intermediary.

Meanwhile, the regular ARVN units in Quang Tri were out of both of these channels entirely, sending their scant information back to First Division headquarters in Hue. This problem was "solved" by having the U.S. advisers assigned to these regular army echelons exchange data with the U.S. provincial adviser. Not surprisingly, the latter individual became increasingly powerful in Quang Tri, especially since he also had a special "slush-fund" to pay off his own agents, and to parcel out to his "counterpart" on an achievement basis.

Beyond the three networks mentioned above, there was also a Vietnamese "DMZ Security" group, which sent intelligence directly to the Presidential Palace in Saigon. And there was an apparatus called SMIAT (Special Military Intelligence Advisory Team), completely controlled by Americans, which was trying to build a major clandestine agent net across the border into Laos and North

Vietnam. All five elements, however, relied heavily on a relatively small number of paid informants, often the same people who had lived well off the French in a similar capacity.

The admittedly cursory analysis I made of the intelligence situation in all of central Vietnam in 1962–1963 led me to some unsettling conclusions about the various Vietnamese involved, and, beyond that, their apparent alienation from the bulk of the populace.[16] From the Pentagon Papers it is evident that Americans at much higher levels in both Saigon and Washington saw essentially the same things, in other bureaus and ministries as well as intelligence. Yet their responses were always technocratic, half-baked, as if they were trying to avoid probing too far for fear the whole house of cards might come tumbling down.

In intelligence, for example again, they moved on the one hand to pressure Diem to reorganize and consolidate the Vietnamese "intelligence community," although he still saw solid anticoup benefits in keeping it divided. On the other hand, the United States steadily expanded its own autonomous network in Vietnam, as a bypass mechanism and a powerful means of manipulation. After the army's overthrow of Diem, U.S. knowledge of the thoughts and activities of Saigon's top leadership increased considerably, since the military was the one group we had infiltrated early, had plenty of files on, and could easily surround with "advisers" on a day-to-day basis. As might be expected, nevertheless, such developments tended to startle, to antagonize, many Vietnamese officers (usually under the rank of colonel) who had been shielded from the true master-client relationship during the Diem period. Some of them withdrew from the army in disgust. Others stayed on, but showed their displeasure at American manipulation so much that they were given "bad marks" and confined to paper-pushing jobs in supply, transportation, engineering and the like.[17] There were always other officers to take their places, however, men who *knew* they were servants of the Americans and, for one reason or another, were ready to make a good thing of it.

Thus it was that, not only in intelligence, but in all other sensitive fields, a crew of sycophants, money-grubbers and psychopaths moved to the fore. Essentially serving as power-brokers, they found endless ways both to oppress their fellow countrymen and to delude their American masters. General Nguyen Khanh was the epitome of this new "leadership." For twelve months after derailing General Minh in January 1964, he held center stage in Saigon, posturing, shifting ground, bluffing Ambassador Taylor, trying to neutralize his younger rivals, preaching militant anticolonialism for public consumption while working feverishly behind the scenes for ever-deeper U.S. involvement. By early 1965 the United States was "in" as never before, but General Khanh had incurred the wrath of Ambassador Taylor to such a degree that he must have known his days were numbered.[18] Unlike the Diem/Lodge situation, however, General Khanh had taken the necessary personal precautions. Today he lives a comfortable émigré existence in Paris.

General Khanh also demonstrates in many ways why these cynical, corrupt people were clients or servants of the United States, but not really "puppets." For example, Khanh played upon deep American fears of a "neutralist solution" to discredit the Duong Van Minh leadership group and gain support for his coup.[19] Once in power, Khanh kept stalling on his commitments to the United States to mobilize the army and populace against the "Viet Cong threat," perhaps knowing it was futile. Instead, he pushed constantly for U.S. bombing of the North, U.S. ground troops in the South, and a commitment to him as the dictator-president of the country. Ironically, the more the United States committed itself to Vietnam, the less reason there was for Khanh or any of his successors to think about "internal reform," much less social revolution.[20]

Without question, it was the very *weakness* of the combined U.S.-Saigon position that gave Khanh, Ky, Thieu, Khiem, and all the others a significant degree of leverage with their masters. Once these men were convinced that U.S. power and prestige was irrevocably committed, they could let the energetic, grim-faced Americans worry about holding off the Communists, while they spent most of their time trying to consolidate personal and clique power and privilege. Whenever the Americans protested about the Vietnamese not "carrying their share of the burden," they could make some more promises and reshuffle a few commanders or ministers. If this wasn't enough, they might strike a pained, anticolonialist posture and hint at negotiations with the enemy (both Khanh and Ky did this)—although this was always a risky last resort.

The United States could and did respond to these tactics several times by dumping one man or one clique. But the overall situation was always so tenuous that we could never risk throwing out the entire crew. Since our clients understood this fully as well as we did, they eventually made tacit arrangements among themselves to slow down the political attrition, "divide up the territory," and share the spoils. Being highly ambitious men, this has not always worked.[21] Nevertheless, the continuity since June 1965, when General Ky took over as premier, has been striking. And it is likely to continue for as long as the United States remains committed to killing Vietnamese in order to save them. But not a day longer.

Notes

1. The "saving" metaphor crops up repeatedly in documents of the period. In the Pentagon Papers, Gravel ed., see for example: Gen. Lansdale, II:38; Vice-President Johnson, II:59; and Rusk/McNamara, II:111.

2. Vice-President Johnson presents perhaps the most fearful picture. Gravel ed., II:57.

3. The fact that even today American policymakers adhere to the term "pacification," and that their Saigon counterparts still employ the old feudal Vietnamese equivalent, *binh-dinh,* is testimony to how little they know, or care, about Vietnamese history and popular historical memories.

4. Back in these "good old days" of U.S. intervention, the NLF had very few 50 caliber machine guns, seized from ARVN. 20 millimeter antiaircraft guns were nonexistent, not to mention larger-caliber weapons and missiles.

5. A glowing if brief account of Operation Binh Tay is contained in *Time* magazine, August 31, 1962.

6. The latter refers to Colonel Nguyen Van Y, head of Saigon's "Central Intelligence Organization"—an apparatus originally forced on Diem by the United States to try to unify intelligence processing and interpretation. Surprisingly, the "Yankee" nickname even crops up in a 1961 cable from Ambassador Durbrow. Gravel ed., II:28.

7. See for example the 1961 JCS estimates whereby 40,000 U.S. troops would be sufficient to "clean up" the Viet-Cong, or 205,000 to handle the situation if both the DRV *and* China entered the conflict too. Gravel ed., II:108–109.

8. Senator Henry Jackson, "A Key to Victory in Vietnam," *Army,* March 1963, p. 62.

9. "Memorandum for the President," November 11, 1961. Gravel ed., II:115.

10. II:139–140. Thompson's subordinate, Denis Duncanson, has written the most comprehensive defense of these repressive tactics, in *Government and Revolution in Vietnam* (Oxford, 1968).

11. Douglas Pike, *Viet-Cong, the Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (MIT Press, 1966). Edward G. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars* (Harper and Row, 1972).

12. In the period 1961–1964, see especially the famous Staley Report, where the overall objective is to "surpass the critical threshold of the enemy resistance" (Gravel ed., II:63). The authors of the Pentagon Papers are no less guilty of such reasoning, as when on the basis of 1961–1967 experiences they conclude that there is a need for more "stick" and less "carrot" with the Saigon regime (Gravel ed., II:415). In late 1962 I traveled from village to village with U.S. Special Forces "civic action" teams and watched them gain public attention by passing out thousands of pieces of hard candy to children. The candy had been donated in big tins by an American manufacturer.

13. See also the authors of the Pentagon Papers using such images, as when they state that the United States forced General Nguyen Chanh Thi to get "back on his leash before it was too late" (Gravel ed., II:99).

14. The authors of the Pentagon Papers label this an "impudent" slap in the face to the United States. Gravel ed., II:203.

15. "Memorandum for the President," November 11, 1961. Gravel ed., II:114.

16. In all fairness I should state here that I had not yet come to question the right of the United States to be in Vietnam, only the seemingly shoddy way we were doing things. It wasn't until early 1966 that I concluded we had no business there at all.

17. During this period American "advisers" regularly sent in evaluations of their counterparts. These were combined with meticulous reports from supervisory personnel at bases in the United States where almost all South Vietnamese officers underwent training, and with gossip from paid agents, to make up an ever-expanding U.S. intelligence personality file. If a Vietnamese officer was listed as "friendly," "cooperative," "eager to learn," "competent in English," he had a bright future. However, if he was "reserved," "suspicious," "reluctant to accept advice," he was in for trouble.

18. A serious student of this whole master-client symbiosis could begin with the relationship between Taylor and Khanh over time. Taylor was outfoxed so often that it became something of a joke in top Saigon circles. But when Taylor came to realize this, of course he had the last word.

19. There is far more evidence than is presented in the Pentagon Papers to indicate that the United States was very worried about President de Gaulle's neutralization proposals and the effects they might be having on the Saigon regime. David Marr, "Background on Coup in South Vietnam, 30 Jan. 1964," unpublished manuscript. David Marr, "The Political Crisis in Viet-Nam: 1963–1964," also unpublished. General Khanh, in a recent interview, has claimed that his American adviser, Colonel Jasper Wilson, helped him take over. Pacific News Service press release, February 1972.

20. The Pentagon Papers demonstrate that whereas U.S. policymakers occasionally perceived this dilemma, they had no real answers to it. Gravel ed., II:96, 202–203, 280–281, 309, 330–332, 336, 345.

21. One of the best examples is the continuing cutthroat competition at the highest levels for control of the illicit drug traffic. See Albert McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, Harper and Row, 1972.

13. Vietnamization and the Drama of the Pentagon Papers

by Peter Dale Scott

The Nixon strategy which underlies both Vietnamization and the Peking visit envisages a return from overt to covert operations in Southeast Asia. The U.S. Army is being withdrawn from Vietnam, while Congressional exposures reveal the Mafia influence behind the corruption there of its senior personnel.[1] But the Army's place is being filled by a billion-dollar "pacification" program, including an expansion of the CIA's controversial assassination project, Operation Phoenix.[2] Generally speaking, the responsibility for ground operations in Indochina (as opposed to the ongoing air war) is being taken from the regular military, and given back to the various U.S. intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA. The political success or "momentum" of the antiwar movement, at this point, is thus being exploited to strengthen the very intelligence activities which did so much to bring about the war in the first place.

This amazing capacity of the intelligence apparatus to gather strength from its defeats was illustrated earlier after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Then as now the response of the government to the fiasco (an interagency fiasco, involving not only CIA but Air America, air force, and special forces personnel) was to strengthen, consolidate, and rationalize the "Special Group" or "303 Committee" apparatus which had produced it.[3] In 1971 there were similar signs that the Vietnam fiasco is being used to strengthen the case for relying on the "expertise" of the intelligence professionals.

The elaborate drama of the Pentagon Papers must be assessed in the light of this bureaucratic retrenchment and consolidation. One feels about their publication as one does about Mr. Nixon's Peking visit (which was announced just fifteen days after the courtroom drama of the Pentagon Papers had brought public support for the Vietnam military adventure to a probable all-time low). It is possible to approve of both events, while fearing that they will help to perpetuate the imperialist intervention which superficially they appear to challenge. Daniel Ellsberg is undoubtedly a powerful and moving critic of conventional warfare in Vietnam, and one does not wish to sound ungrateful for his courageous revelations. When, however, he told the American nation on TV that "for the first time we are hearing the truth" about the war, he was proclaiming a false millennium.

The Pentagon Papers are of value, but more for what they reveal inadvertently than for what they reveal by design. It would be foolish to expect candor from any government documents on Vietnam, whether written for internal or external consumption: at least one disaffected veteran from the White House staff has commented that he would have a less biased picture of the war if he had confined his reading to the newspapers. One Pentagon study repeats the old cliché about a "pro-communist . . . offensive" of May 1964 in Laos: it is considerably

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more misleading than the original *New York Times* story which it partly echoes, and is inexcusable in the light of authoritative accounts which had already been published.[4] Another Pentagon study's account of the Tonkin Gulf incidents is little more than an abridgment of McNamara's clumsy misrepresentations of 1964 and 1968 to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[5] The House Committee's censored text of this study deletes its references to McNamara's "proof" of the second incident from alleged radio intercepts, including one "indicating that 'North Vietnamese naval forces had been ordered to attack the patrol.' "[6] The most likely reason for censoring this already-published "proof" is that its falsehood had already been demonstrated.[7]

More serious than such particular instances of self-serving disinformation is the overall inherent bias in a record of Defense Department papers. Though the true history of our escalating involvement in Indochina is a history of covert and intelligence operations, most of the recent ones are barely recorded (two striking exceptions, the Diem coup of 1963 and the 34A Operations Plan of 1964, had already been amply publicized). Needless to say, there is even less documentation of key escalation decisions (such as Johnson's decision of 12 November 1966 to bomb Hanoi) which the President arrived at privately—either alone, or after consulting with his political intimates, such as Ed Weisl, Tommy Corcoran, and James Rowe, who represented the highest financial interests in the nation.[8]

With respect to events in November 1963, the bias and deception of the original Pentagon documents are considerably reinforced in the Pentagon studies commissioned by Robert McNamara. Nowhere is this deception more apparent than in the careful editing and censorship of the Report of a Honolulu Conference on November 20, 1963, and of National Security Action Memorandum 273, which was approved four days later. Study after study is carefully edited so as to create a false illusion of continuity between the last two days of President Kennedy's presidency and the first two days of President Johnson's. The narrow division of the studies into topics, as well as periods, allows some studies to focus on the "optimism"[9] which led to plans for withdrawal on November 20 and 24, 1963; and others on the "deterioration" and "gravity"[10] which at the same meetings led to plans for carrying the war north. These incompatible pictures of continuous "optimism" or "deterioration" are supported generally by selective censorship, and occasionally by downright misrepresentation:

> . . . National Security Action Memorandum 273, approved 26 November 1963. The immediate cause for NSAM 273 was the assassination of President Kennedy four days earlier; newly-installed President Johnson needed to reaffirm or modify the policy lines pursued by his predecessor. President Johnson quickly chose to reaffirm the Kennedy policies. . . .
>
> Emphasis should be placed, the document stated, on the Mekong Delta area, but not only in military terms. Political, economic, social, educational, and informational activities must also be pushed: "We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief. . . ." Military operations should be initiated, under close political control, up to within fifty kilometers inside of Laos. *U.S. assistance programs should be maintained at levels at least equal to those under the Diem government so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage.*
>
> The same document also revalidated the planned phased withdrawal of U.S. forces announced publicly in broad terms by President Kennedy shortly before his death:
>
> The *objective* of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of

> U.S. military personnel remains as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.
>
> *No new programs were proposed or endorsed,* no increases in the level or nature of U.S. assistance suggested or foreseen. . . . The emphasis was on persuading the new government in Saigon to do well those things which the fallen government was considered to have done poorly. . . . *NSAM 273 had,* as described above, *limited cross-border operations to an area 50 kilometers within Laos.*[11]

The reader is invited to check the veracity of this account of NSAM 273 against the text, as reconstructed from various sources, in our Appendix A. If the author of this study is not a deliberate and foolish liar, then some superior had denied him access to the second and more important page of NSAM 273, which "authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV," i.e., North Vietnam.[12] As we shall see, this covert operations planning soon set the stage for a new kind of war, not only through the celebrated 34A Operations which contributed to the Tonkin Gulf incidents, but also through the military's accompanying observations, as early as December 1963, that "only air attacks" against North Vietnam would achieve these operations' "stated objective." [13] Leslie Gelb, the Director of the Pentagon Study Task Force and the author of the various and mutually contradictory Study Summaries, notes that, with this planning, "A firebreak had been crossed, and the U.S. had embarked on a program that was recognized as holding little promise of achieving its stated objectives, at least in its early stages." [14] We shall argue in a moment that these crucial and controversial "stated objectives," proposed in CINCPAC's OPLAN 34–63 of September 9, 1963, were rejected by Kennedy in October 1963, and first authorized by the first paragraph of NSAM 273.

The Pentagon studies, supposedly disinterested reports to the Secretary of Defense, systematically mislead with respect to NSAM 273, which McNamara himself had helped to draft. Their lack of *bona fides* is illustrated by the general phenomenon that (as can be seen from our Appendix A), banal or misleading paragraphs (like 2, 3, and 5) are quoted verbatim, sometimes over and over, whereas those preparing for an expanded war are either omitted or else referred to obliquely. The *only* study to quote a part of the paragraph dealing with North Vietnam does so from subordinate instructions: it fails to note that this language was authorized in NSAM 273.[15]

And study after study suggests (as did press reports at the time) that the effect of NSAM 273, paragraph 2, was to perpetuate what Mr. Gelb ill-advisedly calls "the public White House promise in October" to withdraw 1,000 U.S. troops.[16] In fact the public White House statement on October 2 was no promise, but a personal estimate attributed to McNamara and Taylor. As we shall see, Kennedy's decision on October 5 to implement this withdrawal (a plan authorized by NSAM 263 of October 11), was not made public until the Honolulu Conference of November 20, when an Accelerated Withdrawal Program (about which Mr. Gelb is silent) was also approved.[17] NSAM 273 was in fact approved on Sunday, November 24, and its misleading opening paragraphs (including the meaningless reaffirmation of the "objectives" of the October 2 withdrawal statement) were leaked to selected correspondents.[18] Mr. Gelb, who should know better, pretends that NSAM 273 "was intended primarily to endorse the policies pursued by President Kennedy and to ratify provisional decisions reached [on November 20] in Honolulu." [19] In fact the secret effect of NSAM 273's sixth paragraph (which unlike the second was not leaked to the press) was to *annul* the NSAM 263 withdrawal decision announced four days earlier at Honolulu, and also the Accelerated Withdrawal Program: "both military and economic programs, it was emphasized, should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime." [20]

The source of this change is not hard to pinpoint. Of the eight people known to have participated in the November 24 reversal of the November 20 withdrawal decisions, five took part in both meetings.[21] Of the three new officials present, the chief was Lyndon Johnson, in his second full day and first business meeting as President of the United States.[22] The importance of this second meeting, like that of the document it approved, is indicated by its deviousness. One can only conclude that NSAM 273(2)'s public reaffirmation of an October 2 withdrawal "objective," coupled with 273(6)'s secret annulment of an October 5 withdrawal plan, was deliberately deceitful. The result of the misrepresentations in the Pentagon studies and Mr. Gelb's summaries is, in other words, to perpetuate a deception dating back to NSAM 273 itself.

This deception, I suspect, involved far more than the symbolic but highly sensitive issue of the 1,000-man withdrawal. One study, after calling NSAM 273 a "generally sanguine" "don't-rock-the-boat document," concedes that it contained "an unusual Presidential exhortation": "The President expects that all senior officers of the government will move energetically to insure full unity of support for establishing U.S. policy in South Vietnam." [23] In other words, the same document which covertly changed Kennedy's withdrawal plans ordered all senior officials not to contest or criticize this change. This order had a special impact on one senior official: Robert Kennedy, an important member of the National Security Council (under President Kennedy) who was not present when NSAM 273 was rushed through the forty-five minute "briefing session" on Sunday, November 24. It does not appear that Robert Kennedy, then paralyzed by the shock of his brother's murder, was even invited to the meeting. Chester Cooper records that Lyndon Johnson's first National Security Council meeting was not convened until Thursday, December 5.[24]

NSAM 273. PARAGRAPH 1: THE CENTRAL OBJECTIVE

While noting that the "stated objectives" of the new covert operations plan against North Vietnam were unlikely to be fulfilled by the OPLAN itself, Mr. Gelb, like the rest of the Pentagon Study Authors, fails to inform us what these "stated objectives" were. The answer lies in the "central objective" defined by the first paragraph of NSAM 273:

> It remains *the central objective* of the United States in South Vietnam *to assist* the people and Government of that country *to win* their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution *to this purpose*.[25]

To understand this bureaucratic prose we must place it in context. Ever since Kennedy came to power, but increasingly since the Diem crisis and assassination, there had arisen serious bureaucratic disagreement as to whether the U.S. commitment in Vietnam was limited and political ("to assist") or open-ended and military ("to win"). By its use of the word "win," NSAM 273, among other things, ended a brief period of indecision and division, when indecision itself was favoring the proponents of a limited (and political) strategy, over those whose preference was unlimited (and military).[26]

In this conflict the seemingly innocuous word "objective" had come, in the Aesopian double-talk of bureaucratic politics, to be the test of a commitment. As early as May 1961, when President Kennedy was backing off from a major commitment in Laos, he had willingly agreed with the Pentagon that "The U.S. objective and concept of operations" was "to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam." [27] In November 1961, however, Taylor, McNamara, and Rusk attempted to strengthen this language, by recommending that "We now take the decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism." [28] McNamara had earlier concluded that this "commitment . . . to the clear objective" was the "basic issue," adding that it should be accompanied by a "warning" of "punitive retaliation against North Vietnam." Without this commitment, he added, "We do not believe major U.S. forces should be introduced in South Vietnam." [29]

Despite this advice, Kennedy, after much thought, accepted all of the recommendations for introducing U.S. units, *except* for the "commitment to the objective" which was the first recommendation of all. NSAM 111 of November 22, 1961, which became the basic document for Kennedy Vietnam policy, was issued without this first recommendation.[30] Instead he sent a letter to Diem on December 14, 1961, in which "the U.S. officially described the limited and somewhat ambiguous extent of its commitment: . . . 'our primary purpose is to help your people. . . . We shall seek to persuade the Communists to give up their attempts of force and subversion.' " [31] One compensatory phrase of this letter ("the campaign . . . supported and directed from the outside") became (as we shall see) a rallying point for the disappointed hawks in the Pentagon; and was elevated to new prominence in NSAM 273(1)'s definition of a Communist "conspiracy." It would appear that Kennedy, in his basic policy documents after 1961, avoided any use of the word "objective" that might be equated to a "commitment." The issue was not academic: as presented by Taylor in November 1961, this commitment would have been open-ended; "to deal with any escalation the communists might choose to impose." [32]

In October 1963, Taylor and McNamara tried once again: by proposing to link the withdrawal announcement about 1,000 men to a clearly defined and public policy "objective" of defeating communism. Once again Kennedy, by subtle changes of language, declined to go along. His refusal is the more interesting when we see that the word and the sense he rejected in October 1963 (which would have made the military "objective" the *overriding* one) are explicitly sanctioned by Johnson's first policy document, NSAM 273.

A paraphrase of NSAM 273's seemingly innocuous first page was leaked at the time by someone highly-placed in the White House to the Washington *Post* and the *New York Times* (see Appendix B). As printed in the *Times* by E. W. Kenworthy this paraphrase went so far as to use the very words, "overriding objective," which Kennedy had earlier rejected.[36] This tribute to the words' symbolic importance is underlined by the distortion of NSAM 273, paragraph 1, in the Pentagon Papers, so that the controversial words "central objective" never once appear.[37] Yet at least two separate studies understand the "objective" to constitute a "commitment": "NSAM 273 reaffirms the U.S. commitment to defeat the VC in South Vietnam." [38] This particular clue to the importance of NSAM 273 in generating a policy commitment is all the more interesting, in that the Government edition of the Pentagon Papers has suppressed the page on which it appears.

PROPOSED STATEMENT OCT. 2, 1963 (McNamara-Taylor)	ACTUAL STATEMENT OCT. 2, 1963 (White House–Kennedy)	NSAM 273 (SECRET) NOV. 26, 1963 (White House–Johnson)
The security of South Vietnam *remains vital to United States security.* For this reason we adhere to *the overriding objective of denying* this country to Communism and of suppressing the Viet Cong insurgency as promptly as possible. Although we are deeply concerned by repressive practices, *effective performance* in the conduct of the war should be the *determining factor* in our relations with the GVN.[33]	The security of South Vietnam *is a major interest of the United States as other free nations.* We will adhere to *our policy of working with the people and Government of South Vietnam to deny* this country to communism and to suppress the *externally stimulated and supported insurgency* of the Viet Cong as promptly as possible. *Effective performance* in this undertaking is the *central objective* of our policy in South Vietnam. While such practices have not yet significantly affected the war effort, they could do so in the future. It remains the *policy* of the United States, in South Vietnam *as in other parts of the world,* to support the efforts of the people of that country to defeat aggression and to build a peaceful and free society.[34]	It remains the *central objective* of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country *to win* their contest against the externally *directed* and supported communist *conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contributions to this purpose.*[35]

NSAM 273, PARAGRAPH 9(?): THE "CASE" FOR ESCALATION

NSAM 273's suppression of Kennedy's political goal ("to build a peaceful and free society"), is accompanied by its authorization of planning for "selected actions of *graduated* (i.e., escalating) scope and intensity" against North Vietnam.[39] This shift from political to military priorities was properly symbolized by NSAM 273's use of the word "objective": for in November 1961 the rejected word had been linked to escalation proposals such as "the 'Rostow plan' of applying *graduated* pressures" on North Vietnam,[40] which Kennedy had then also rejected and which Johnson now also revived. Rostow personally was able to submit to the new President "a well-reasoned case for a gradual escalation" within days of Kennedy's assassination;[41] and it is clear that NSAM 273 saw where such escalations might lead. In its last provision, which sounds almost as if it might have been drafted by Rostow personally, "State was directed to develop a strong, documented case 'to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained, and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels.'"[42]

At the time of this directive it was known, and indeed admitted in the U.S. press, that "all the weapons captured by the United States . . . were either homemade or had been previously captured from the GVN/USA." [43] William Jordan, an official directed in January 1963 to get information on Northern infiltration, had already reported on April 5 that he could not: "we are unable to document and develop any hard evidence of infiltration after October 1, 1962." [44] In the words of a State Department representative on the Special Group, "the great weight of evidence and doctrine proved 'that the massive aggression theory was completely phony.' " [45]

But where the January directive was to get information, NSAM 273's was different, to make a "case." [46] The evidence for the "case" seems to have been uncovered soon after the directive, but at the price of controversy.

By February 1964, apparently,

> The Administration was firmly convinced from interceptions of radio traffic between North Vietnam and the guerrillas in the South that Hanoi controlled and directed the Vietcong. Intelligence analyses of the time [February 12, 1964] stated, however, that "The primary sources of Communist strength in South Vietnam are indigenous." [47]

This is interesting, for radio intercepts also supplied firm grounds for escalation during the Tonkin Gulf incidents of August 1964, the *Pueblo* incident of January 1968, and the Cambodian invasion of May 1970—three escalations which were all preceded by like controversies between intelligence operations and analysts. And in these three escalations the key intercept evidence later turned out to be highly suspicious if not indeed deliberately falsified or "phony." [48] In like manner Congress should learn whether the radio intercepts establishing Hanoi's external direction and control of the Vietcong emerged before or (as it would appear) *after* the directive to develop just such a "case."

It is clear that at the time the military and CIA understood the novel opportunities afforded them by NSAM 273: within three weeks they had submitted an operations plan (the famous OPLAN 34A memorandum of December 19) which unlike its predecessors included overt as well as covert and nonattributable operations against North Vietnam, up to and including air attacks.[49] Yet this novelty is denied by *all* the Pentagon studies which mention NSAM 273; it is admitted by only one Pentagon study (IV.C.2.b), which (as we shall see) discusses NSAM 273 without identifying it.

The full text of NSAM 273 of November 26, 1963, remains unknown. In all three editions of the Pentagon Papers there are no complete documents between the five cables of October 30 and McNamara's memorandum of December 21; the 600 pages of documents from the Kennedy Administration end on October 30. It is unlikely that this striking lacuna is accidental. We do, however, get an ominous picture of NSAM 273's implications from General Maxwell Taylor's memorandum of January 22, 1964:

> National Security Action Memorandum No. 273 makes clear the resolve of the President to ensure victory over the externally directed and supported communist insurgency in South Vietnam. . . . The Joint Chiefs of Staff are convinced that, in keeping with the guidance in NSAM 273, the United States must make plain to the enemy our determination to see the Vietnam campaign through to a favorable conclusion. To do this, we must prepare

> for whatever level of activity may be required and, being prepared, must then proceed to take actions as necessary to achieve our purposes surely and promptly.[50]

The Joint Chiefs urged the President to end "self-imposed restrictions," to go beyond planning to the implementation of covert 34A operations against the North and Laos, and in addition to "conduct aerial bombing of key North Vietnam targets."

It was not only the military who drew such open-ended conclusions from the apparently "limited" wording of NSAM 273. As a State Department official told one Congressional committee in February 1964, "the basic policy is set that we are going to stay in Vietnam in a support function as long as needed to win the war." [51] McNamara himself told another committee that the United States had a commitment to win, rather than "support":

> The survival of an independent government in South Vietnam is so important . . . that I can conceive of no alternative other than to take all necessary measures within our capability to prevent a Communist victory.[52]

All of this, like the text of NSAM 273 itself, corroborates the first-hand account of the November 24 meeting reported some years ago by Tom Wicker. According to that account Johnson's commitment, a message to the Saigon government, was not made lightly or optimistically. The issue was clearly understood, if not the ultimate consequences:

> Lodge . . . gave the President his opinion that hard decisions would be necessary to save South Vietnam. "Unfortunately, Mr. President," the Ambassador said, "you will have to make them." The new President, as recalled by one who was present, scarcely hesitated. "I am not going to lose Vietnam," he said. "I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went." . . . His instructions to Lodge were firm. The Ambassador was to return to Saigon and inform the new government there that the new government in Washington intended to stand by previous commitments and continue its help against the Communists. In effect, he told Lodge to assure Big Minh that Saigon "can count on us." That was a pledge. . . . All that would follow . . . had been determined in that hour of political decision in the old Executive Office Building, while . . . Oswald gasped away his miserable life in Parkland Hospital.[53]

The new President's decisions to expand the war by bombing and to send U.S. troops would come many months later. But he had already satisfied the "military" faction's demand for an unambiguous commitment, and ordered their "political" opponents to silence.

NSAM 273(2) AND 273(6): THE DOUBLETALK ABOUT "WITHDRAWAL"

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had consistently and persistently advised their civilian overseers (e.g., on May 10, 1961 and January 13, 1962) that for what they construed as the "unalterable objectives" of victory a decision should be made to deploy additional U.S. forces, including combat troops if necessary.[54] They were opposed from the outset by the proponents of a more political "counterinsurgency" concept, such as Roger Hilsman. But in April 1962 Ambassador Galbraith in New Delhi proposed to President Kennedy a different kind of (in his words) "political solution." Harriman, he suggested, should tell the Russians

> of our determination not to let the Viet Cong overthrow the present government. . . . The Soviets should be asked to ascertain whether Hanoi can and will call off the Viet Cong activity in return for *phased American withdrawal,* liberalization in the trade relations between the two parts of the country and general and non-specific agreement to talk about reunification after some period of tranquillity.[55]

It is of course highly unusual for ambassadors to report directly to presidents outside of "channels." Contrary to usual practice the memorandum did not come up through Secretary Rusk's office; the White House later referred the memorandum for the comments of the Secretary of Defense (and the Joint Chiefs), but *not* of the Secretary of State. The very existence of such an unusual memorandum and procedure demonstrates that President Kennedy was personally interested in at least keeping his "political" options open. This was the second occasion on which Kennedy had used the former Harvard professor as an independent "watchdog" to evaluate skeptically the Rusk-McNamara consensus of his own bureaucracy; and there are rumors that Professor Galbraith (who for some unexplained reason saw President Johnson on November 23, 1963) continued to play this role in late 1963, after his return to Harvard. Another such independent "watchdog" was Kennedy's White House assistant, Michael Forrestal.

The response of the Joint Chiefs to Galbraith's "political solution" was predictably chilly. They argued that it would constitute "disengagement from what is by now a well-known commitment," and recalled that in the published letter of December 14, 1961 to Diem, President Kennedy had written that "we are prepared to help" against a campaign "supported and directed from outside." [56] In their view this language affirmed "support . . . to whatever extent may be necessary," but their particular exegesis, which Kennedy declined to endorse in October 1963, did not become official until Johnson's NSAM 273(1).

On the contrary, for one reason or another, the Defense Department began in mid-1962 "a formal planning and budgetary process" for precisely what Galbraith had contemplated, a "phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam." [57] Pentagon Paper IV.B.4, which studies this process, ignores the Galbraith memorandum entirely; and refers instead to what Leslie Gelb calls "the euphoria and optimism of July 1962." [58] Assuredly there were military professions of optimism, in secret as well as public documents.[59] These professions of optimism do not, however, explain why in 1963 the actual level of U.S. military personnel continued to rise, from 9,865 at New Year's[60] (with projected highs at that time of 11,600 in Fiscal Year 1963, 12,200 in February 1964, and 12,200 in February 1965) to unanticipated levels of 14,000 in June and 16,500 on October.[61] About these troop increases, which Diem apparently opposed,[62] the Pentagon Papers are silent.

By mid-1963, with the aggravating political crisis in Vietnam, the pressure to move ahead with withdrawal plans was increasing. This increased pressure was motivated not by military "euphoria" (if indeed it ever had been) but by political dissatisfaction. A State Department telegram from Rusk to Lodge on August 29, 1963, expresses the opinion that U.S. political pressures on Diem would otherwise be futile:

> Unless such talk included a real *sanction* such as a threatened *withdrawal* of our support, it is unlikely that it would be taken seriously by a man who may feel that we are inescapably *committed* to an anti-Communist Vietnam.[63]

Pentagon Paper IV.B.4 ignores this telegram as well; yet even it (in marked contrast to Leslie Gelb's "Summary and Analysis" of it) admits that

> Part of the motivation behind the stress placed on U.S. force withdrawal, and particularly the seemingly arbitrary desire to effect the 1,000-man withdrawal by the end of 1963, apparently was as a signal to influence both the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese and set the stage for possible later steps that would help bring the insurgency to an end.[64]

At the time of Galbraith's proposal for talks about phased U.S. withdrawal between Harriman and the Russians, Harriman was Chairman of the American delegation to the then deadlocked Geneva Conference on Laos, which very shortly afterwards reconvened for the rapid conclusion of the 1962 Geneva Agreements. Relevant events in that development include a sudden U.S. troop buildup in Thailand in May, the agreement among the three Laotian factions to form a coalition government on June 11, and Khrushchev's message the next day hailing the coalition agreement as a "pivotal event" in Southeast Asia and good augury for the solution of "other international problems which now divide states and create tension." [65] The signing of the Geneva Accords on July 23 was accompanied by a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops in Thailand, as well as by a considerable exacerbation of Thai-U.S. relations, to the extent that Thailand, infuriated by lack of support in its border dispute with Cambodia, declared a temporary boycott of SEATO.[66]

The 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos were marked by an unusual American willingness to "trust" the other side.[67] Chester Cooper confirms that their value lay in

> a private deal worked out between the leaders of the American and Soviet delegations—the "Harriman-Pushkin Agreement." In essence the Russians agreed to use their influence on the Pathet Lao, Peking, and Hanoi to assure compliance with the terms agreed on at the Conference. In exchange for this, the British agreed to assure compliance by the non-Communists.[68]

He also confirms that, before Harriman and Kennedy could terminate U.S. support for the CIA's protege in Laos, Phoumi Nosavan, "some key officials in our Mission there . . . had to be replaced." [69] The U.S. *Foreign Service List* shows that the officials recalled from Vientiane in the summer of 1962 include both of the resident military attachés and also the CIA Station Chief, Gordon L. Jorgensen.[70]

This purge of right-wing elements in the U.S. Mission failed to prevent immediate and conspicuous violation of the Agreements by Thai-based elements of the U.S. Air Force through jet overflights of Laos. These same overflights, according to Hilsman, had been prohibited by Kennedy, on Harriman's urging, at a National Security Council meeting. In late October 1963 Pathet Lao Radio began to complain of stepped-up intrusions by U.S. jet aircraft, as well as of a new military offensive by Phoumi's troops (about which we shall say more later).[71]

According to Kenneth O'Donnell, President Kennedy had himself (like Galbraith) abandoned hopes for a military solution as early as the spring of 1963.

O'Donnell allegedly heard from Kennedy then "that he had made up his mind that after his re-election he would take the risk of unpopularity and make a complete withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam . . . in 1965." [72] Whether the President had so unreservedly and so early adopted the Galbraith perspective is debatable; there is, however, no questioning that after the Buddhist crisis in August the prospect of accelerated or total withdrawal was openly contemplated by members of the bureaucracy's "political" faction, including the President's brother.

How profoundly this issue had come to divide "political" and "military" interpreters of Administration policy is indicated by General Krulak's minutes of a meeting in the State Department on August 31, 1963:

> Mr. Kattenburg stated . . . it was the belief of Ambassador Lodge that, if we undertake to live with this repressive regime . . . we are going to be thrown out of the country in six months. He stated that at this juncture it would be better for us to make the decision to get out honorably. . . . Secretary Rusk commented that Kattenburg's recital was largely speculative; that it would be far better for us to start on the *firm basis of two things—that we will not pull out of Vietnam until the war is won, and that we will not run a coup*. Mr. McNamara expressed agreement with this view. Mr. Rusk . . . then asked the Vice President if he had any contribution to make. The Vice President stated that he agreed with Secretary Rusk's conclusions completely; that he had great reservations himself with respect to a coup, particularly so because he had never really seen a genuine alternative to Diem. He stated that from both a practical and a political viewpoint, it would be a *disaster to pull out;* that we should stop playing cops and robbers and . . . once again go about *winning* the war.[73]

At this meeting (which the President did not attend) the only opposition to this powerful Rusk-McNamara-Johnson consensus was expressed by two more junior State Department officials with OSS and CIA backgrounds: Paul Kattenburg (whom Rusk interrupted at one heated point) and Roger Hilsman. One week later, however, Robert Kennedy, who was the President's chief troubleshooter in CIA, Vietnam, and counterinsurgency affairs, himself questioned Secretary Rusk's "firm basis" and entertained the solution which Johnson had called a "disaster":

> The first and fundamental question, he felt, was what we were doing in Vietnam. As he understood it, we were there to help the people resisting a Communist take-over. The first question was whether a Communist take-over could be successfully resisted with any government. If it could not, *now was the time to get out of Vietnam entirely,* rather than waiting. If the answer was that it could, but not with a Diem-Nhu government as it was now constituted, we owed it to the people resisting Communism in Vietnam to give Lodge enough *sanctions* to bring changes that would permit successful resistance.[74]

One way or another, in other words, withdrawal was the key to a "political" solution.

These reports show Robert Kennedy virtually isolated (save for the support of middle-echelon State officials like Hilsman and Kattenburg) against a strong Rusk-McNamara bureaucratic consensus (supported by Lyndon Johnson). Yet in October and November both points of Mr. Rusk's "firm basis" were undermined by the White House: unconditional plans for an initial troop withdrawal were announced on November 20; and the United States, by carefully meditated personnel changes and selective aid cuts, gave signals to dissident generals in Saigon that it *would* tolerate a coup. The first clear signal was the unusually publicized removal on October 5 of the CIA station chief in Saigon, John Richardson, because of his close identification with Diem's brother Ngo dinh Nhu. And, as Leslie Gelb notes, "In October we cut off aid to Diem in a direct rebuff, giving a green light to the generals.[75]

But this brief political trend, publicly announced as late as November 20, was checked and reversed by the new President at his first substantive policy meeting on November 24. As he himself reports,

> I told Lodge and the others that I had serious misgivings. . . . Congressional demands for our withdrawal from Vietnam were becoming louder and more insistent. I thought we had been mistaken in our failure to support Diem. . . . I told Lodge that I had not been happy with what I read about our Mission's operations in Vietnam earlier in the year. There had been too much internal dissension. I wanted him to develop a strong team. . . . In the next few months we sent Lodge a new deputy, a new CIA chief, a new director of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) operations, and replacements for other key posts in the U.S. Embassy.[76]

In other words, Richardson's replacement (presumably Frederick W. Flott) was himself replaced (by Peer de Silva, an Army Intelligence veteran). Others who were purged included the number two Embassy official, William Trueheart, a former State intelligence officer, and John W. Mecklin, the USIA director: both Trueheart and Mecklin were prominent, along with Kattenburg and Hilsman, in the "get Diem" faction. This purge of the Embassy was accompanied by the replacement, on January 7, 1964, of Paul Kattenburg as Chairman of the Vietnam Inter-Department Working Group, and soon after by the resignation of Roger Hilsman.[77] The State Department's *Foreign Service List* failed to reflect the rapidity with which this secret purge was affected.[78]

Above all NSAM 273 sent a new signal to the confused Saigon generals, to replace the "political" signals of October and November. For the first time (as we shall see) they were told to go ahead with a "graduated" or escalating program of clandestine military operations against North Vietnam.[79] On January 16 these 34A Operations were authorized to begin on February 1. In Saigon as in Washington, a brief interlude of government by politically minded moderates gave way to a new "military" phase. On January 30, Nguyen Khanh ousted the Saigon junta headed by Duong van Minh, on the grounds that some of its members were "paving the way for neutralism and thus selling out the country." [80] According to the Pentagon Papers Khanh notified his American adviser, Col. Jasper Wilson, of the forthcoming coup; but in a recent interview Khanh has claimed Wilson told him of the American-organized coup less than twenty-four hours in advance.[81]

Lyndon Johnson, like other observers, discounts the novelty of NSAM 273, by referring back to President Kennedy's firm statements in two TV interviews of early September. In one of these Kennedy had said, "I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw." In the other, he had argued against any cut in U.S. aid to South Vietnam: "I don't think we think that would be helpful at this time. . . . You might have a situation which could bring about a collapse."[82] From these two statements Ralph Stavins has also concluded that "had John F. Kennedy lived, he would not have pulled out of Southeast Asia and would have taken any steps necessary to avoid an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Viet Cong.[83]

But Kennedy had clearly shifted between early September 1963 (when he had pulled back from encouraging a reluctant Saigon coup) and late November (after he had given the signals for one). The TV interviews soon proved to be poor indicators of his future policy: by mid-October Kennedy was making significant aid cuts, as requested by dissident generals in Saigon, in order to weaken Diem's position, and above all to remove from Saigon the CIA-trained Special Forces which Diem and Nhu relied on as a private guard.[84] And on October 2 the White House statement had announced that

> Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965, though there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 U.S. military personnel assigned to South Viet-Nam can be withdrawn.[85]

This language constituted a personal "judgment" rather than an authorized "plan" (or, as Mr. Gelb calls it, a "public . . . promise"). The distinction was recognized by the secret McNamara-Taylor memorandum of October 2 which proposed it. McNamara and Taylor, moreover, recommended an announcement as "consistent" with a program whose inspiration was explicitly political:

> an application of selective short-term *pressures,* principally economic, and the conditioning of long-term aid on the satisfactory performance by the Diem government in meeting military and political objectives which *in the aggregate equate to* the requirements of final victory.[86]

The memo called for the Defense Department "to announce in the very near future presently prepared plans [as opposed to intentions] to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel"[87] (p. 555). This recommendation was approved by the President on October 5, and incorporated in NSAM 263 of October 11, but with the proviso that "no *formal* announcement be made of the *implementation* of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963."[88]

Instead the President began to leak the NSAM 263 plans informally. In his press conference of October 31, on the eve of the coup against Diem, the President answered an informed question about "any speedup in the withdrawal from Vietnam" by speculating that "the first contingent would be 250 men who are not involved in what might be called front-line operations."[89] A fortnight later he was more specific, in the context of a clearly political formulation of U.S. policy objectives:

> That is our object, to bring Americans home, permit the South Vietnamese to maintain themselves as a free and independent country, and permit democratic forces within the country to operate. . . . We are going to bring back several hundred before the end of the year. But on the question of the exact number, I thought we would wait until the meeting of November 20th.[90]

The November 20 meeting was an extraordinary all-agency Honolulu Conference of some 45 to 60 senior Administration officials, called in response to the President's demand for a "full-scale review" of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, following the overthrow of Diem.[91] This all-agency Conference, like the follow-up "Special Meeting" of June 1964, is apparently to be distinguished from the regular SecDef Honolulu Conferences, such as the Seventh in May 1963 and the Eighth in March 1964.[92] It was extraordinary in its size and high-level participation (McNamara, Rusk, McCone, McGeorge Bundy, Lodge, Taylor, Harkins), yet Robert Kennedy, the President's Vietnam trouble-shooter, did not attend: on November 20 he celebrated his birthday at home in Washington. (The only Cabinet members left in Washington were Attorney General Robert Kennedy, HEW Secretary Celebrezze, and the new Postmaster General John Gronouski. Because of a coincident Cabinet trip to Japan, Dillon of Treasury, Hodges of Commerce, Wirtz of Labor, Freeman of Agriculture, and Udall of the Interior were also in Honolulu during this period.)[93]

As the President's questioner of October 31 was apparently aware, the issue was no longer whether 1,000 men would be withdrawn (with a Military Assistance Program reduction in Fiscal 1965 of $27 million), but whether the withdrawal program might not be *accelerated* by six months, with a corresponding MAP aid reduction of $33 million in Fiscal 1965.[94] Planning for this second "Accelerated Plan" had been stepped up after the October 5 decision which authorized the first.[95] The issue was an urgent one, since the Fiscal 1965 budget would have to be presented to Congress in January.

The chronology of Pentagon Paper IV.B.4, on Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, tells us that on November 20, two days before the assassination, the Honolulu Conference secretly "agreed that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six months directed by McNamara in October) should be maintained." [96] In addition the Honolulu Conference issued a press release which, according to the *New York Times*, "reaffirmed the United States *plan* to bring home about 1,000 of its 16,500 troops from South Vietnam by January 1." [97] Thus the language of NSAM 273 of November 26, by going back to the status quo ante October 5, was itself misleading, as is the careful selection from it in the Pentagon Study. By reverting to the informal "objective" of October 2, NSAM 273(2) tacitly effaced both the formalized plans of NSAM 263 (October 5 and 11) announced on November 20, and *also* the Accelerated Plan discussed and apparently agreed to on the same day. NSAM 273(6), according to most citations of it, would have explicitly "maintained both military and economic programs . . . at levels as high as those . . . of the Diem regime." [98]

Most volumes of the Pentagon Papers attribute the letter and spirit of NSAM 273 to a misplaced military "optimism." [99] But President Johnson's memoirs confirm the spirit of urgency and "serious misgivings" which others have attributed to the unscheduled Sunday meeting which approved it.[100] President Kennedy had envisaged no formal meetings on that Sunday: instead he would have met Lodge privately for lunch at his private Virginia estate (or, according to William Manchester at Camp David).[101] But President Johnson, while still in Dallas on November 22, "felt a national security meeting was essential at the earliest possible moment"; and arranged to have it set up "for that same evening." [102]

Johnson, it is true, tells us that his "first exposure to the details of the problem of Vietnam came forty-eight hours after I had taken the oath of office," [103] i.e., on Sunday, November 24. But Pentagon Study IV.B.4 and the *New York Times* make it clear that on Saturday morning, for fifty minutes, the President and McNamara discussed a memorandum of some four or five typewritten pages:

> In that memo, Mr. McNamara said that the new South Vietnamese government was confronted by serious financial problems, and that the U.S. must be prepared to raise planned MAP levels.[104]

The Chronology adds to this information the statement that "funding well above current MAP plans was envisaged." [105]

The true significance of the symbolic 1,000-man withdrawal was as a political signal; and politics explains why NSAM 263 was overridden. As we have seen, another Pentagon study admits that

> The seemingly arbitrary desire to effect the 1,000-man reduction by the end of 1963, apparently was as a signal to influence both the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese and set the stage for possible later steps that would help bring the insurgency to an end.[106]

Different officials no doubt had different "possible later steps" in mind. But, as the Kennedy Administration must have known in early October, the August 29 proposal by de Gaulle for the reunification and neutralization of Vietnam could only have been strengthened by this signal.[107] Precisely the same thinking, as we have seen, dictated the policy reversal of November 24: U.S. programs would be maintained at at least their old levels, "so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage." [108]

NSAM 263 of October 11, which approved Kennedy's ill-fated withdrawal plan, formalized a presidential decision of October 5, sandwiched between the return of his Paris Ambassador, Charles Bohlen, on October 3, and the arrival in Washington on October 5 of French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville.[109] On October 7 Couve de Murville, after seeing the President, sent up another signal by his announcement (later confirmed by Arthur Schlesinger) that a visit to Washington by General de Gaulle was planned for "some time" (i.e., February) in 1964.[110]

The month of November 1963 saw significant signals from the other side of renewed interest in a "political solution," signals which appalled Rusk and other members of the State Department:

> The situation since the November coup had been further complicated by new proposals for a negotiated settlement involving the reunification of all of Vietnam, as envisaged in the 1954 agreements, and its neutralization on something like the Laotian pattern. The Ho Chi Minh regime . . . gave indications of renewed interest in a "political" solution of much the same character that General de Gaulle had suggested.[111]

The Pentagon Papers note tersely in one chronology that in November 1963 "FRANCE proposed talks leading towards the establishment of a neutral, independent South Vietnam." [112] U Thant also presented Washington with proposals for a neutralist coalition government that would have included some of the pro-French Vietnamese exiles living in Paris.[113] The clandestine radio of the National Liberation Front, broadcasting in South Vietnam, began in November a series of appeals for negotiations aimed not only at the Vietnamese people but also at members of the new military junta that succeeded Diem.[114]

It is true that Rusk (like Johnson and others in the Administration) was bitterly opposed to disengagement and said so both privately and publicly.[115] But it is clear that through the last month of the Diem crisis (i.e., October) the

White House communicated more and more with Lodge directly via the CIA network, rather than through Rusk and regular State Department channels. It is also known that, in this same period, Kennedy authorized exploratory talks with Cuban representatives, in which his envoy, Ambassador William Atwood, was instructed to report to the White House directly, rather than through the State Department.[116]

Assessed in military terms, the matter of a 1,000-man troop withdrawal was not important, and one can speak loosely of a continuity between the bureaucratic policies of the Defense and State Departments (or of McNamara and Rusk) before and after the assassination. But in the steps taken by Kennedy, particularly after Diem's death, to implement and announce a withdrawal, the President was indeed giving signals of his own dissatisfaction with the existing policies of his own bureaucracy, and his willingness to entertain a new alternative.[117]

It is possible that the secret approval on November 20 of the Accelerated Troop Withdrawal Plan should be seen as flowing not from either military or diplomatic opportunity, so much as from financial necessity. The President was under double pressure to reduce government expenditure in general and the balance of payments deficit in particular. To strengthen both the domestic economy and his own political prospects he had already decided on a tax cut in 1964; in September as a consequence he had ordered "a policy of severe restraint" in the next budget, for fear of a huge $12 to $15 billion deficit.[118] With respect to foreign aid in particular, Congress was even more economy-minded than the President, slashing his $4.5 billion request for Fiscal Year 1964 by almost $1 billion.[119]

But if the tax cut and projected budget deficit were not further to threaten the stability of the dollar in the international monetary system, it was particularly urgent that the President take steps to improve the U.S. balance of payments, and reduce the increasing outflow of gold. In early 1963 many U.S. government departments were ordered to balance their overseas expenditures against earnings (through so-called "gold dollar budgets").[120] Stringent measures taken by the Pentagon to curb overseas spending by U.S. army personnel and their dependents made it clear this was a significant factor in the balance of payments problem and gold outflow.

Partly to reduce this factor, the Pentagon proceeded with its much-publicized program to develop mobile task forces based in the United States. In October, on the eve of Operation "Big Lift," an unprecedented airlift of such mobile forces from America to Germany, Roswell Gilpatric predicted in a major policy speech that the time was near when the "United States should be able to make useful reductions in its heavy overseas military expenditures." As the *Times* noted, his "diplomatically phrased comments on reducing overseas forces" were approved by the White House.[121]

In this way the issue of U.S. overseas troop levels was, for both budgetary and monetary reasons, closely linked to the overall Kennedy strategy for movement towards international relaxation of the cold war and conversion to a full-employment civilian economy at home. On both scores the Kennedy Administration claimed progress in the second part of 1963, progress attested to by the increasing concern of spokesmen for the defense-aerospace industries. The signing of the U.S.-Soviet test-ban treaty on August 5 in Moscow, while a Soviet band played Gershwin's "Love Walked In," had been followed by a series of hints in both capitals of U.S.-Soviet cooperation, in the fields of space, civilian air travel, and arms limitation. In November 1963 Roswell Gilpatric announced a "major government-industry planning effort" for possible transition from defense to civilian spending,[122] while McNamara himself, in the week leading up to the assassination, hinted at a U.S.-Soviet strategic parity, "perhaps even at a lower level than today." [123] *Business Week,* in its last pre-assassination issue, saw no ambiguity in this delicate language: "The word came loud and clear this week from Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara: A major cut in defense spending is in the works." [124]

This prediction, of course, proved false: the projected "major cut" never came, and a chief reason for this was the Vietnam war. I am not at all trying to suggest here that the new Johnson Administration moved consciously and at once to arrest the projected "civilianization" of the U.S. budget and economy. In fact the overall budget levels of the Fiscal '65 budget, initiated by Kennedy and presented by Johnson in January 1964, *did* show token reductions in spending overall, in defense, and even in defense research and development. It is said that, as late as the beginning of 1965, "aerospace companies were fully prepared for a decline in business," until the sudden "steep escalation of the Vietnam war." [125]

Yet it is striking that the new Johnson Administration, while slightly reducing its overall defense procurement program (through a fall-off in the nearly completed missile procurement program) did move rapidly and significantly to increase its procurements of aircraft (the aircraft used, when finally delivered, in the Vietnam air war).[126] It is true that the 1963–1964 Kennedy budget had put forward $6.4 billion for aircraft procurement, but in fact the Kennedy Administration made commitments from July to November at an annual rate of only $5 billion, while the Johnson Administration finished the fiscal year with a whopping cumulative total of $6.8 billion in new obligations. This was the highest aircraft procurement total in five years.

The huge commitment of $1.1 billion for new aircraft procurement in February 1964 (as opposed to $368 million in November 1963), can and indeed must be directly related to the JCS proposals in that month for the bombing of North Vietnam. These proposals, as we have seen, were put forward on the authority of NSAM 273 of November 26, 1963. Thus the budgetary and strategic implications of abandoning the November 20 decision (for an Accelerated Withdrawal Program) were far greater and more immediate than is indicated by the external budgetary outlines of overall defense spending.

It is clear that the Accelerated Withdrawal Program was abandoned three or four days after its approval on November 20, for it entailed the kind of reduction in support which NSAM 273 prohibited. In addition it would appear that the new Johnson Administration even cancelled the published decision for a 1,000-man troop withdrawal in late 1963. I myself believe that there was never any such withdrawal, or anything like it. Mr. Gelb's summary of Pentagon Study IV.B.4 states categorically that "the U.S. did effect a 1,000 man withdrawal in December of 1963"; but the study itself calls this an "accounting exercise" that "did not even represent a decline of 1,000 from the October peak of 16,732." [127] Its Chronology adds that "Although 1,000 men were technically withdrawn, no actual reduction of U.S. strength was achieved." [128]

Another study states that on January 1, 1964, there were only 15,914 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam;[129] and this figure, if true, might represent an appreciable decline from the October high of 16,500 (up from 14,000 in June).[130] But this year-end figure has already been revised downwards too many times in recent years for any Pentagon estimate to have much credibility. In 1966, for example, the Pentagon told one Congressional Committee that the

1963 year-end figure was 16,575 (which if true would represent an actual increase of 75 men);[131] and in 1968 it told another Committee that the figure was 16,263 (a reduction of 237).[132] It seems possible that the only significant reduction was that of from 220 to 300 men on December 3, which had been publicly forecast by the President on October 31, and confirmed by the November 20 Honolulu press release. (This withdrawal, unlike the more drastic proposals, did not appear to entail any lowering of the MAP levels, and thus might be compatible with NSAM 273.)

NSAM 273, PARAGRAPH 7(?): GRADUATED COVERT MILITARY OPERATIONS

All of this suggests that the Pentagon Studies misrepresent NSAM 273 systematically. Although it is of course possible that NSAM 273 had already been censored before it was submitted to some or all of the authors of the Pentagon Papers, it is striking that different studies use different fragments of evidence to arrive (by incompatible narratives) at the same false picture of continuity between November 20 and 24. One study (IV.B.3, p. 37) suggests that these were "no new programs" proposed either at the Honolulu Conference or in NSAM 273, because of the "cautious optimism" on both occasions. Another (IV.C.2.a, pp. 1–2) speaks of a "different . . . new course of action" in early 1964—the 34A covert operations—that flowed from a decision "made" at the Honolulu Conference under Kennedy and ratified on November 26 under Johnson:

> The covert program was spawned in May of 1963, when the JCS directed CINCPAC to prepare a plan for GVN "hit and run" operations against NVN. These operations were to be "non-attributable" and carried out "with U.S. military material, training and advisory assistance." *4/* Approved by the JCS on 9 September as CINCPAC OPLAN 34–63, the plan was discussed during the Vietnam policy conference at Honolulu, 20 November 1963. Here a decision was made to develop a combined COMUSMACV-CAS, Saigon plan for a 12-month program of covert operations. Instructions forwarded by the JCS on 26 November specifically requested provision for: "(1) harassment; (2) diversion; (3) political pressure; (4) capture of prisoners; (5) physical destruction; (6) acquisition of intelligence; (7) generation of intelligence; and (8) diversion of DRV resources." Further, that the plan provide for "selected actions of graduated scope and intensity to include commando type coastal raids." *5/* To this guidance was added that given by President Johnson to the effect that "planning should include . . . estimates of such factors as: (1) resulting damage to NVN; (2) the plausibility of denial; (3) possible NVN retaliation; and (4) other international reaction." *6/* The MACV-CAS plan, designated OPLAN 34A, and providing for "a spectrum of capabilities for RVNAF to execute against NVN," was forwarded by CINCPAC on 19 December 1963. *7/* The idea of putting direct pressure on North Vietnam met prompt receptivity on the part of President Johnson.

The density of misrepresentations in this study, and especially this paragraph, suggest conscious deception rather than naïve error. The footnotes have unfortunately been suppressed, so we do not have the citation for the alleged directive of May 1963. The chronology summarizing this Study gives a clue, however, for it reads "11 May 63# NSAM 52# Authorized CIA-sponsored operations against NVN." [133] But the true date of NSAM 52, as the author must have known, was May 11, 1961; and indeed he makes a point of contrasting the sporadic CIA operations, authorized in 1961 and largely suspended in 1962, with the 34A "elaborate program" of *sustained* pressures, under a *military* command, in three planned "graduated" or *escalating* phases, which began in February 1964.

The inclusion in planning of MACV was in keeping with the Kennedy doctrine, enacted after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, that responsibility for "any *large* paramilitary operation wholly or partly covert . . . is properly the primary responsibility of the Department of Defense." [134] Before November 26, 1963, U.S. covert operations in Asia had always (at least in theory) been "secret" and "plausibly deniable"; these were the two criteria set for itself in 1948 by the National Security Council when it first authorized CIA covert operations under its "other functions and duties" clause in the 1947 National Security Act.[135] Throughout 1963 the Kennedy Administration was under considerable pressure, public as well as within its personnel, to go beyond these guidelines, and intervene "frankly" rather than "surreptitiously." In May 1963 this appeal for escalation was publicly joined by William Henderson, an official of Socony Mobil which had a major economic interest in Southeast Asia, to an appeal to move from a "limited" to an "unlimited" commitment in that area.[136]

The covert operations planning authorized by NSAM 273 seems to have been the threshold for at least the first of these policy changes, if not both. In contrast both were wholly incompatible with the Kennedy Administration's last movements toward withdrawal. In May 1963 McNamara had authorized changes in long-range planning "to accomplish a more rapid withdrawal" [137] and on November 20 in Honolulu, as we have seen, the resulting initial withdrawal of 1,000 men was supplemented by the so-called Accelerated Plan.[138] It is hard to imagine, at either date, the same man or men contemplating a new 34A "elaborate program" of acts which threatened war, to coincide with an accelerated withdrawal of U.S. forces.

The next sentence of Study IV.C.2.a tells us that CINCPAC OPLAN 34–63 was "approved by the JCS on 9 September"—this "approval" means only that, at the very height of the paralytic stand-off between the "political" and "military" factions, the Joint Chiefs forwarded one more tendentious "military" alternative for consideration by McNamara and above all by the 303 Committee (about whom the author is silent). One Gravel Pentagon Papers Chronology (III:141) suggests that Kennedy and his White House staff never were consulted by McNamara about OPLAN 34–63.

The same Gravel chronology reports that CIA cross-border operations, radically curtailed after the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos, were resumed by November 19, 1963, one day before the Honolulu Conference, even though the first Presidential authorization cited for such renewed operations is Johnson's NSAM 273 of November 26.[139] Kennedy's NSAM 249 of June 25, 1963, in rejecting State's proposals for actions against North Vietnam, had authorized planning for operations against Laos conditional on further consultation; and it had urged review whether "additional U.S. actions should be taken in Laos before any action be directed against North Vietnam." [140]

Although the overall language of NSAM 249 (which refers to an unpublished memorandum) is obscure, this wording seems to indicate that in June 1963 Kennedy had delayed authorization of *any* action against North Vietnam. Yet North Vietnamese and right-wing U.S. sources agree that in this very month of

June 1963 covert operations against North Vietnam were resumed by South Vietnamese commandoes; these actions had the approval of General Harkins in Saigon, but not (according to the U.S. sources) of President Kennedy.[141] The same sources, further corroborated by the Pentagon Papers, both linked these raids to increased military operation between South Vietnam and the Chinese Nationalists, whose own commandoes began turning up in North Vietnam in increasing numbers.[142]

It has also been suggested that KMT influences, and their sympathizers in Thailand and the CIA, were behind the right-wing political assassinations and military offensive which in 1963 led to a resumption of fighting in Laos, "with new American supplies and full U.S. political support." [143] This autumn 1963 military offensive in Laos coincided with escalation of activities against Prince Sihanouk in Cambodia by the CIA-supported Khmer Serei in South Vietnam. After two infiltrating Khmer Serei agents had been captured and had publicly confessed, Cambodia on November 19 severed all military and economic ties with the United States, and one month later broke off diplomatic relations.[144]

All of these disturbing events suggest that, in late 1963, covert operations were beginning to escape the political limitations, both internal and international (e.g., the Harriman-Pushkin agreement), established during the course of the Kennedy Administration. During the months of September and October many established newspapers, including the *New York Times,* began to complain about the CIA's arrogation of power; and this concern was echoed in Congress by Senator Mansfield.[145] The evidence now published in the Pentagon Papers, including Kennedy's NSAM 249 of June and the Gravel chronology's testimony to the resumption of crossborder operations, also suggests that covert operations may have been escalated in defiance of the President's secret directives.

If this chronology is correct, then Pentagon Study IV.C.2.a's efforts to show continuity between the Kennedy and Johnson regimes suggest instead that President Kennedy had lost control of covert planning and operations. OPLAN 34–63, which "apparently . . . was not forwarded to the White House" [146]

> was discussed during the Vietnam policy conference at Honolulu, 20 November 1963. Here a decision was made to develop a combined COMUSMACV-CAS, Saigon plan for a 12-month program of covert operations.

That NSAM 273's innovations were hatched at Honolulu is suggested also by the Honolulu press communiqué, which, anticipating NSAM 273(1), spoke of "an encouraging outlook for the *principal objective* of joint U.S.-Vietnamese policy in South Vietnam." In Pentagon Study IV.B.4, this anticipatory quotation is completed by language reminiscent of Kennedy's in early 1961 "—the successful prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong communists." [147] But at the Honolulu press conference the same key phrase was pointedly (and presciently) glossed by Defense and State spokesmen Arthur Sylvester and Robert C. Manning, in language which Kennedy had never used or authorized, to mean "the successful promotion of the war against the *North Vietnam* Communists." [148]

Study IV.C.2.a's implication that the escalation planning decision was made officially by the Honolulu Conference (rather than at it without Kennedy's authorization) is hard to reconcile with the other Studies' references to the Conference's "optimism" and projections of withdrawal. The author gives no footnote for these and crucial sentences; and in contrast to his own Chronology he does not even mention NSAM 273. His next citation is to the JCS directive on November 26 (which, we learn from his own Chronology and Stavins, repeats that of NSAM 273 itself);[149] but this citation clearly begs the question of what official decision, if any, was reached on November 20. What is left of interest in the author's paragraph is the speedy authorization by the infant Johnson Administration, and the personal guidance added to the new JCS directives by the new President himself.

NSAM 273, it seems clear, was an important document in the history of the 1964 escalations, as well as in the reversal of President Kennedy's late and ill-fated program of "Vietnamization" by 1965. The systematic censorship and distortion of NSAM 273 in 1963 and again in 1971, by the Pentagon study and later by the *New York Times,* raises serious questions about the *bona fides* of the Pentagon study and of its release. It also suggests that the Kennedy assassination was itself an important, perhaps a crucial, event in the history of the Indochina war.

Assuredly there is much truth to be learned from the Pentagon Papers. Nevertheless their preparation, if not the drama of their release, represents one more manipulation of "intelligence" in order to influence public policy. Someone is being carefully protected by the censorship of NSAM 273, and by the concealment of the way in which the assassination of President Kennedy affected the escalation of the Indochina War. It is almost certain that McCone, perhaps the leading hawk in the Kennedy entourage, played a role in this secret policy reversal.

Elsewhere in the *Times* version of the Pentagon Papers one finds the intelligence community, and the CIA in particular, depicted as a group of lonely men who challenged the bureaucratic beliefs of their time, but whose percipient warnings were not listened to. In June 1964, we are told, the CIA "challenged the domino theory, widely *believed* in one form or another within the Administration," but the President unfortunately was "not inclined to adjust policy along the lines of this *analysis* challenging the domino theory." [150] In late 1964 the "intelligence community," with George Ball and almost no one else, " 'tended toward a pessimistic view' of the effect of bombing on the Hanoi leaders. . . . As in the case of earlier intelligence findings that contradicted policy intentions, the study indicates no effort on the part of the President or his most trusted advisers to reshape their policy along the lines of this analysis." [151]

In part, no doubt, this is true; just as the intelligence community did include within it some of the administration's more cautious and objective advisers. But once again the impression created by such partial truth is wholly misleading, for throughout this period McCone used his authority as CIA Director to recommend a sharp escalation of the war. In March 1964 he recommended "that North Vietnam be bombed immediately and that the Nationalist Chinese Army be invited to enter the war." [152] A year later he criticized McNamara's draft guidelines for the war by saying we must hit North Vietnam "harder, more frequently, and inflict greater damage." [153] Meanwhile, at the very time that some intelligence personnel discreetly revived the possibility of a Vietnam disengagement, other intelligence operations personnel proceeded with the planning which led to the Tonkin Gulf incidents.

As presented by the *New York Times,* the Pentagon Papers suggested that the Indochina war was the result of a series of mistakes. According to this model, the war was to be analyzed as a sequence of official decisions reached by public officials through constitutional procedures, and these officials (now almost all departed from office) erred in their determination of the national interest. The Times Pentagon Papers suggested further that good intelligence was in fact available at the time, but was unfortunately ignored in a sequence of bad decisions. One is invited to conclude that the intelligence community should have greater influence in the future.

In my researches of the past six years I have reached almost precisely the opposite conclusion. The public apparatus of government, with respect to Indochina, has been manipulated for the furtherance of private advantage, whether bureaucratic, financial, or both simultaneously. The policies which led to escalation after escalation, though disastrous when evaluated publicly, served very well the private purposes of the individuals and institutions that consciously pursued them. And the collective influence of the so-called "intelligence community" (no community in fact, but a cockpit of competing and overlapping cabals) has been not to oppose these disasters, but to make them possible.

This is not a blanket accusation against all intelligence personnel, least of all against the relatively enlightened professionals of the CIA. It is a blanket challenge to the system of secret powers which permits the manipulation of intelligence, and the staging of so-called "political scenarios" in other nations, with impunity and without public control. This country's constitution will be still further weakened if, as after the Bay of Pigs, the exposure of an intelligence "fiasco" becomes the prelude for a further rationalization and reinforcement of a secret intelligence apparatus.

In the evolution of the Indochina war, the impact of the intelligence community has not been represented by the neglected memoranda of cautious and scholarly analysts. The power and influence of these agencies has lain in the convergence of intelligence and covert operations, and even more in the proximities of the agencies and their "proprietaries" (like Air America) to ultimate centers of private power such as the firms of Wall Street and the fortunes of the Brook Club. If the American public is to gain control of its own government, then it must expose, and hopefully repeal, those secret sanctions by which these ostensibly public agencies can engage us in private wars.

After the Bay of Pigs, Congress allowed the executive to clean its own house. This time it must struggle to recover its lost control of the power to make war. It is obvious that at present the majority of Congressmen are not so inclined. There may, however, be some who will exercise their investigatory powers to pursue, expose, and ultimately end the full story of the war conspiracy.

And if not, then, in the name of peace, others must do it for them.

Notes

1. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Fraud and Corruption in Management of Military Club Systems, Hearings,* 92nd Cong. 1st Sess. (8 October 1969), pp. 275–279. Capital for the supply and kickback operations of Sgt. William Higdon and Sgt. Major William Woolridge, the Army's senior noncommissioned officer, came "from Deak & Co. . . . in Hong Kong . . . through an individual name[d] Frank Furci." Frank's father, Dominic Furci, was a lieutenant in the Florida Mafia family of Santos Trafficante, allegedly a major narcotics trafficker. Trafficante and Dominic Furci visited Frank Furci in Hong Kong in 1968 (p. 279; cf. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Organized Crime and Illicit Traffic in Narcotics, Hearings,* 88th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington: G.P.O., 1964, pp. 522–523, 928).

2. *NYT,* 7 April 1971, pp. 1, 15.

3. Ralph Stavins, "Kennedy's Private War," *New York Review of Books,* 22 July 1971, p. 26; cp. Ralph Stavins *et al., Washington Plans an Aggressive War* (New York:

Vintage, 1971), p. 60. While Mr. Stavins' account is useful, he is wrong in asserting that the "303 Committee . . . came into being as a direct consequence of the egregious blundering at the Bay of Pigs." In fact this committee of deputy secretaries, known earlier as the "54–12 Committee," had been established in December 1954; Kennedy's innovation was to bureaucratize and expand its activities, particularly by establishing a Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) to insure the development of programs for it (NSAM 124, 18 January 1962; cf. Harry Howe Ransom, *The Intelligence Establishment,* Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 89).

4. U.S. Government edition, IV.C.2.a, p. 20; Gravel edition, III:165. Cf. *NYT,* May 18, 1964, p. 1; Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 256. The USG ed. claims that on May 21 "the United States obtained Souvanna Phouma's permission to conduct low-level reconnaissance operations," but this "permission" was apparently deduced from a general request for assistance. Souvanna Phouma's first known response to the question of reconnaissance flights in particular was to request their discontinuance (*NYT,* June 11, 1964, p. 1; Peter Dale Scott, *The War Conspiracy* [New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1972], pp. 37–39).

5. The Study even repeats (p. 10) McNamara's discredited claim that "Our ships had absolutely no knowledge" of the 34A swift-boat operations in the area, although McNamara himself had already backed down when confronted with references to the 34A operations in our ships' cable traffic. (*Gulf of Tonkin . . . Hearing* [1968], p. 31: "Secretary McNamara: The *Maddox* did know what 34A was. . . . I did not say they did not know anything about it.")

6. Gravel ed., III:184–185. This passage corresponds to the suppressed page seven of USG ed., IV.C.2.b. The full text is reprinted in this volume.

7. Anthony Austin, *The President's War* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971), pp. 334–335; cf. Scott, pp. 58, 71–75. The same Study reveals (p. 8) that the *Maddox*'s Task Group was itself the source of the disputed "Intercept Group No. 4," which McNamara cited as "proof" of the second incident on August 4, but which probably derives in fact from the first incident on August 2.

8. Johnson's decision to bomb Hanoi was made in the isolation of the LBJ ranch on November 12, 1966 (a date supplied by Admiral Sharp). One day earlier, on November 11, he received a personal report from Ambassador Harriman on current prospects for negotiation. Cf. Scott, *The War Conspiracy,* pp. 105–106; *NYT,* November 12, 1966, p. 8.

9. USG ed., IV.C.1, pp. ii, 2; Gravel ed., III:2, 17.

10. USG ed., IV.B.5, pp. viii, 67; Gravel ed., II:207, 275–276. Leslie Gelb, Director of the Pentagon Study Task Force and author of the study summaries, himself talks in one study summary of "optimism" (III:2); and in another of "gravity" and "deterioration" (II:207).

11. USG ed., IV.B.3, pp. 37–38; Gravel ed., II:457–459; emphasis added.

12. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii; Gravel ed., III:117; cf. Pentagon Papers (New York Times/Bantam), p. 233. Another study on Phased Withdrawal (IV.B.4, p. 26; Gravel ed., II:191) apparently quotes directly from a close paraphrase of NSAM 273(2), not from the document itself. Yet the second page of NSAM 273 was, as we shall see, a vital document in closing off Kennedy's plans for a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces.

13. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. ix; Gravel ed., III:117.

14. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. i; Gravel ed., III:106.

15. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 2; Gravel ed., III:150–151; cf. Stavins *et al.*, pp. 93–94.

16. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. v; Gravel ed., II:163.

17. *NYT,* November 21, 1963, pp. 1, 8; Richard P. Stebbins, *The United States in World Affairs, 1963* (New York: Harper and Row, for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1964), p. 193: "In a meeting at Honolulu on November 20, the principal U.S. authorities concerned with the war could still detect enough evidence of improvement to justify the repatriation of a certain number of specialized troops." Jim Bishop (*The Day Kennedy Was Shot,* New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968, p. 107) goes further: "They may also have discussed how best to extricate the U.S. from Saigon; in fact it was a probable topic and the President may have asked the military for a

timetable of withdrawal." Cf. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170: "20 Nov. 63 . . . officials agreed that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six months directed by McNamara in October) should be maintained."

18. *NYT,* November 25, 1963, p. 5; Washington *Post,* November 25, 1963, A2. See Appendix B.

19. USG ed., IV.C.1, p. ii; Gravel ed., III:2.

20. USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 3; Gravel ed., III:18.

21. Rusk, McNamara, Lodge, McGeorge Bundy, and apparently McCone. McCone was not known earlier to have been a participant in the Honolulu Conference, but he is so identified by USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 25 (Gravel ed., II:190).

22. It would appear that the only other new faces were Averell Harriman (who represented State in the interdepartmental "303 Committee" for covert operations) and George Ball.

23. USG ed., IV.C.1, pp. 1–3; Gravel ed., III:17–18.

24. Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1970), p. 222. Cooper should know, for he was then a White House aide to McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. If he is right, then Pentagon study references to an NSC meeting on November 26 (USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 26; Gravel ed., II:191) are wrong—naïve deductions from NSAM 273's misleading title.

25. Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 45. Cf. USG ed., IV.C.1, pp. 46–47, which for "objective" reads "object."

26. Some disgruntled officials told the *New York Times* that as late as the Honolulu Conference on November 20, two days before the assassination, "there had been a concentration on 'something besides winning the war' " (*NYT,* November 25, 1963, p. 5).

27. NSAM 52 of May 11, 1961, in Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam, p. 126).

28. Rusk-McNamara memorandum of November 11, 1961, in Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 152; Gravel ed., II:113.

29. McNamara memorandum of November 8, 1961, commenting on Taylor Report of November 3, 1961; Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), pp. 148–149; Gravel ed., II:108–109.

30. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), pp. 107, 152; Gravel ed., II:110, 113, 117.

31. G. M. Kahin and J. W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: Delta, 1967), p. 129; letter in Department of State, *Bulletin,* January 1, 1962, p. 13; Gravel ed., II:805–806.

32. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 148.

33. McNamara-Taylor Report of October 2, 1963, in Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 213; Gravel ed., II:753.

34. Gravel ed., II:188.

35. L. B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point,* p. 45.

36. *NYT,* November 25, 1963, pp. 1, 5: "President Johnson reaffirmed today the policy objectives of his predecessor regarding South Vietnam. . . . The adoption of all measures should be determined by their potential contribution to this overriding objective."

37. In one case the disputed word "objective" is misquoted as "object" (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 46; Gravel ed., III:50). In another, it is paraphrased as "purpose" (USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67; Gravel ed., II:276). In all other studies this sentence is ignored.

38. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. xxxiv (suppressed); Gravel ed., II:223. Cf. USG ed., IV.B.3, p. 37; Gravel ed., II:457: "that the U.S. reaffirm its commitment."

39. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii; Gravel ed., III:117. Cf. The inexcusable *non sequitur* by Leslie Gelb in USG ed., IV.B.3, p. v; Gravel ed., II:412: "If there had been doubt that the limited risk gamble undertaken by Eisenhower had been *transformed into an unlimited commitment under Kennedy,* that doubt should have been dispelled internally by NSAM 288's statement of objectives." NSAM 288 of 17 March 1964 was of course a Vietnam policy statement under *Lyndon Johnson,* the first after NSAM 273, and a document which dealt specifically with the earlier noted discrepancy

between NSAM 273's "stated objectives" and the policies it envisaged. As USG ed., IV.C.1 points out (p. 46; Gravel ed., III:50), "NSAM 288, being based on the official recognition of the fact that the situation in Vietnam was considerably worse than had been realized at the time of . . . NSAM 273, outlined a program that called for considerable enlargement of U.S. effort. . . . In tacit acknowledgment that this greater commitment of prestige called for an enlargement of stated objectives, NSAM 288 did indeed enlarge these objectives. . . . NSAM 288 escalated the objectives into a defense of all of Southeast Asia and the West Pacific."

40. Taylor Report of November 3, 1961, in Gravel ed., II:96, emphasis added; cf. USG ed., IV.C.2.b, p. 21 (not in Gravel edition).

41. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation,* p. 527; quoted in USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 2, Gravel ed., II:151.

42. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67; Gravel ed., II:276; cf. W. W. Rostow, "Guerrilla Warfare in Underdeveloped Areas," in Lt. Col. T. N. Greene ed., *The Guerrilla—and How to Fight Him: Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 59: "We are determined to help destroy this international disease, that is, guerrilla war designed, initiated, supplied, and led from outside an independent nation."

43. Stavins, p. 70.

44. Report to Special Group, in Stavins, p. 69. Roger Hilsman (p. 533, cf. p. 529) later revealed that, according to official Pentagon estimates, "fewer infiltrators had come over the trails in 1963 [7,400] than in 1962 [12,400]."

45. Stavins, pp. 70–71.

46. This changed attitude towards the facts must have especially affected Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, who had just circulated a contrary memorandum inside the government: "We have thus far no reason to believe that the Vietcong have more than a limited need for outside resources" (Hilsman, p. 525). Hilsman soon resigned and made his opposing case publicly.

47. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 242; quoting SNIE 50–64 of February 12, 1964, in USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 4.

48. Cf. my forthcoming book, *The War Conspiracy,* cc. 3, 5, 6.

49. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 46; Gravel ed., III:151.

50. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), pp. 274–275.

51. U.S. Cong., House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Winning the Cold War: the U.S. Ideological Offensive, Hearings,* 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Feb. 20, 1964), statement by Robert Manning, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs), p. 811.

52. U.S., Cong., House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965, Hearings,* 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), Part IV, p. 12; cf. pp. 103–104, 117–118.

53. Tom Wicker, *JFK and LBJ: The Influence of Personality Upon Politics* (New York: William Morrow: 1968), pp. 205–206. Cf. I. F. Stone, *New York Review of Books,* March 28, 1968, p. 11; Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel, *Roots of Involvement* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 153: "Lyndon Johnson, President less than forty-eight hours, had just made a major decision on Vietnam and a worrisome one."

54. JCSM-33-62 of 13 Jan. 1962; Gravel ed., II:663–666.

55. Memorandum for the President of April 4, 1962; USG ed., V.B.4, pp. 461–462; Gravel ed., II:671, emphasis added.

56. USG ed., V.B.4, p. 464; Gravel ed., II:671–672.

57. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. i; Gravel ed., II:160.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Arthur Şylvester, the Pentagon press spokesman, reported after a Honolulu Conference in May 1963 the hopes of officials that U.S. forces could be reduced "in one to three years" (*NYT,* May 8, 1963, p. 10; Cooper, *The Lost Crusade,* p. 208).

60. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1967, Hearings,* 89th Cong., 2nd Sess., Washington: G.P.O., 1966, Part 1, p. 378.

61. Projected levels in January 1963 from USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 10; Gravel ed., II:179, cf. p. 163 (Gelb).

62. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade,* p. 207; *NYT,* April 27, 1963. Cooper also tells us

that he "was sent to Vietnam in the spring [of] 1963 to search for the answer to 'Can we win with Diem?' The very phrasing of the question implied more anxiety about developments in Vietnam that official statements were currently admitting" (p. 202).

63. State 272 of August 29, 1963 to Lodge, USG ed., V.B.4, p. 538; Gravel ed., II:738; emphasis added.

64. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 23; Gravel ed., II:189.

65. *NYT*, June 13, 1962, p. 3.

66. Richard P. Stebbins, *The United States in World Affairs 1962* (New York: Harper and Row, for the Council on Foreign Relations), 1963, pp. 197–200.

67. Stebbins [1962], p. 199: "This was not the kind of ironclad arrangement on which the United States had been insisting in relation to such matters as disarmament, nuclear testing, or Berlin."

68. Cooper, p. 190.

69. Cooper, p. 189.

70. Hilsman, pp. 152–153; Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, pp. 33–35.

71. FBIS *Daily Report*, October 24, 1963, PPP3; October 28, 1963, PPP4; October 31, 1963, PPP4. About the same time State Department officials began to refer to "intelligence reports" of increased North Vietnamese activity in Laos, including the movement of trucks; but it is not clear whether these intelligence sources were on the ground or in the air (*NYT*, October 27, 1963, p. 27; October 30, 1963, p. 1).

72. Kenneth O'Donnell, "LBJ and the Kennedy's," *Life* (August 7, 1970), p. 51; *NYT*, August 3, 1970, p. 16. O'Donnell's claim is corroborated by his correct reference (the first I have noted in print) to the existence of an authorized plan in NSAM 263 of October 11: "The President's order to reduce the American personnel in Vietnam by 1,000 men before the end of 1963 was still in effect on the day that he went to Texas" (p. 52).

73. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), pp. 204–205; USG ed., V.B.4, pp. 541–543; Gravel ed., II:742–743, emphasis added.

74. Hilsman, p. 501, emphasis added.

75. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. viii; Gravel ed., II:207. Cf. Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1970), p. 220: "The removal of Nhu's prime American contact, the curtailment of funds for Nhu's Special Forces, and, most importantly, the cutting off of import aid must have convinced the generals that they could proceed without fear of subsequent American sanctions."

76. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 44.

77. Kattenburg had been named Chairman on August 4, 1963, the same day that Frederick Flott assumed his duties in Saigon. Mecklin's replacement, Barry Zorthian, assumed duties in Saigon on February 2, 1964.

78. For the purposes of the April 1964 State Department *Foreign Service List* de Silva remained attached to Hong Kong, and both Richardson and Flott were still in Saigon. In fact de Silva was functioning as Saigon CAS station chief by February 9 (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 33). Trueheart did not surface in Washington until May; his replacement, David Nes, officially joined the Saigon Embassy on January 19, but was already in Saigon during the McNamara visit of mid-December 1963 (USG ed., IV.C.8 [alias IV.C.11], p. 59; (Gravel ed., III:494).

79. USG ed., IV,B.5, p. 67.

80. Franz Schurmann, Peter Dale Scott, Reginald Zelnik, *The Politics of Escalation* (New York: Fawcett, 1966), p. 26.

81. USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 35; Gravel ed., III:37; *Stern* (January 1970).

82. Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 61.

83. Ralph Stavins *et al., Washington Plans an Aggressive War*, p. 81.

84. A White House message on September 17 had authorized Lodge to hold up any aid program if this would give him useful leverage in dealing with Diem (CAP Message 63516; USG ed., V.B.4, II, p. 545; Gravel ed., II:743).

85. *Public Papers of the Presidents*, John F. Kennedy: 1963 (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), pp. 759–760; Gravel ed., II:188.

86. USG ed., V.B.4, Book II, pp. 555, 573; Gravel ed., II:766; emphasis added.

87. *Loc. cit.*, p. 555.

88. *Loc. cit.*, p. 578; cf. IV.B.4, p. d.

89. *Public Papers*, p. 828.

90. Press Conference of November 14, 1963; *Public Papers*, pp. 846, 852.

91. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 24; Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 62; *NYT*, November 21, 1963, p. 8; Weintal and Bartlett, p. 71.

92. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. a, e; Gravel ed., II:166, 171.

93. William Manchester, *The Death of a President: November 20–25, 1963* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 101, 158.

94. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 29; cf. pp. 14–16; cf. Gravel ed., II:180–192. Another study (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 15) quotes different figures, but confirms that a reduction in the Fiscal '65 support level was agreed to at Honolulu.

95. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 23.

96. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170. The text of the same study corroborates this very unclearly (IV.B.4, p. 25; II:190), but the text is strangely self-contradictory at this point and may even have been editorially tampered with. In comparing Honolulu to NSAM 273, the Study assures us of total continuity: "Universally operative was a desire to avoid change of any kind during the critical interregnum period." Yet the same Study gives us at least one clear indication of change. McNamara on November 20 "made it clear that he thought the proposed CINCPAC MAP [Military Assistance Program] could be cut back" (p. 25; II:190); yet McNamara on November 23, in a written memorandum to the new President, "said that . . . the U.S. must be prepared to raise planned MAP levels" (p. 26; II:191; the Chronology adds that "funding well above current MAP plans was envisaged"). The study itself, very circumspectly, calls this "a hint that something might be different," only ten lines after speaking of the "universally operative . . . desire to avoid change of any kind."

What is most striking is that this Study of Phased Withdrawal makes no reference whatsoever to NSAM 273(6), which emphasized that "both military and economic programs . . . should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime" (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 3; Gravel ed., III:18). Yet the Study refers to McNamara's memorandum of November 23, which apparently inspired this directive. Mr. Gelb's summary chooses to skip from October 2 to December 21, and is silent about the Accelerated Withdrawal Plan.

97. *NYT*, November 21, 1963, p. 8, emphasis added. Cf. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67: "An uninformative press release . . . pointedly reiterated the plan to withdraw 1,000 U.S. troops." Inasmuch as this was the first formal revelation of the plan the press release does not deserve to be called "uninformative." I have been unable to locate anywhere the text of the press release.

98. Pentagon Study IV.C.1, p. 2; Gravel ed., III:18, in Appendix A. Cf. USG ed., IV.C.9.a, p. 2; Gravel ed., II:304, in Appendix C.

99. USG ed., IV.B.3, p. 37; IV.C.1, p. ii.

100. Johnson, p. 43; cf. p. 22: "South Vietnam gave me real cause for concern." Chester Cooper (*The Lost Crusade*, New York, Dodd, Mead, 1970) also writes of the "growing concern" and "the worries that were subsumed" in this memorandum; cf. I. F. Stone, *New York Review of Books*, March 28, 1968, p. 11.

101. Johnson writes that Lodge "had flown to Washington a few days earlier for scheduled conferences with President Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and other administration officials" (p. 43). But Rusk, if he had not been turned back by the assassination, would have been in Japan.

102. Johnson, p. 16.

103. Johnson, p. 43.

104. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 26; *NYT*, November 24, 1963, p. 7: "The only word overheard was 'billions,' spoken by McNamara."

105. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170. A page in another Pentagon study, suppressed from the Government volumes but preserved in the Gravel edition, claims, perhaps mistakenly, that Lodge first met with the President in Washington on Friday, November 22, the day of the assassination itself. Gravel ed., II:223 (suppressed page following USG ed., IV.B.5, p. xxxiii); cf. IV.B.5, p. 67.

106. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 23; Gravel ed., II:189.

107. A *New York Times* editorial of October 7, 1963 (p. 30), observed that the "disengagement" deadline of 1965 was "a warning to the Diem-Nhu regime"; and added that de Gaulle's neutralization proposal "should not be excluded from the Administration's current reappraisal."

108. USG ed., IV.B.3, p. 37.

109. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. d, 23; *NYT,* October 4, 1963, p. 2, October 6, 1963, p. 1.

110. *NYT,* October 8, 1963, p. 5; Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 1016. President Kennedy, if he had lived, would have visited Asia in the same month; this was one reason for the advance trip of so many Cabinet members to Japan in November.

111. Stebbins, pp. 193–194.

112. USG ed., VI.A.1, p. 1.

113. *NYT,* 9 March 1965, p. 4; cited in Franz Schurmann, Peter Dale Scott, Reginald Zelnik, *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam* (New York: Fawcett, 1966), p. 28.

114. Schurmann, Scott, and Zelnik, pp. 28–29.

115. Dean Rusk explicitly rejected the French proposal at his Press Conference of November 8, 1963: "To negotiate on far-reaching changes in South Viet-Nam without far-reaching changes in North Viet-Nam seems to be not in the cards." U.S. Department of State *Bulletin,* 25 November 1963, p. 811.

116. William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 144. There are unconfirmed rumors that in late 1963 Kennedy sent former Ambassador Galbraith for similar private exploratory talks with the mainland Chinese in Nepal. This action would make sense in the light of both the President's Vietnam initiative and his decision to have Roger Hilsman prepare his important address of December 13, 1963, to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, which hinted significantly at a new era of improved U.S.-Chinese relations.

117. A collation of the McNamara-Taylor Report of October 2 with the White House announcement of the same day shows that although the 1963 withdrawal announcement was attributed to McNamara and Taylor and recommended by them for "the very near future," it did not form part of the policy announcement they had proposed (Gravel ed., II:188, 752–754). Cf. Weintal and Bartlett, p. 207.

118. *NYT,* September 15, 1963, p. 1.

119. *U.S. News and World Report,* December 2, 1963, p. 50.

120. *NYT,* August 4, 1963, p. 1.

121. *NYT,* October 20, 1963, p. 66.

122. *Aviation Week,* November 11, 1963, p. 31; cf. November 18, p. 25.

123. *NYT,* November 19, 1963, p. 11.

124. *Business Week,* November 23, 1963, p. 41. *Aviation Week* took the speech to mean merely that "the defense budget will level off" (November 25, 1963, p. 29), yet was obviously concerned about "these Soviet-engineered cold war thaws" (January 6, 1964, p. 21). All these professional analysts agreed that, with the imminent completion of the original Kennedy-McNamara five-year program of defense spending on a new missile-oriented defense system, the U.S. defense budget was now at a critical turning point: "Most heavy spending for major strategic weapons such as Polaris missiles, and big bombs, has been completed. No new costly weapons systems are contemplated." (*NYT,* January 6, 1964, p. 55.)

125. *NYT,* January 17, 1966, p. 117.

126. U.S. Department of Defense, *Military Functions and Military Assistance Program: Monthly Report of Status of Funds by Functional Title*; FAD 470 (Washington: Department of Defense, 1964), p. 6.

127. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. v, 30; Gravel ed., II: 163, 191.

128. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. e; Gravel ed., II: 171.

129. USG ed., IV.C.9.a, p. 5; Gravel ed., II:306. USG ed., IV.B.4 (p. 30) claims that the authorized ceiling projected for this date under Kennedy was 15,732, a ceiling raised under Johnson to 15,894 (Gravel ed., II:192).

130. USG ed., IV.B.4 claims an October 1963 high of 16,732; but the same study

makes it clear elsewhere that this was a planning or projected figure, not an actual one (USG ed., IV.B.4, p. c, p. 30; Gravel ed., II:191, cf. 183). Stavins (p. 83) claims that under Kennedy the actual figure "never exceeded 16,000."

131. U.S. Cong., House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1967, Hearings,* 89th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1966) Part I, p. 378.

132. U.S. Cong., Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Gulf of Tonkin, 1964 Incidents,* Part Two, Supplement, Documents, 90th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1968), p. 2. None of these figures supports McNamara's informal estimate in February 1964 that the figure was then not 16,000 but "15,500, approximately"; U.S. Cong., House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965, Hearings,* 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), Part IV., p. 98.

133. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii.

134. NSAM 57 of 1961, in Gravel ed., II:683.

135. David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York: Bantam, 1964), pp. 99–100.

136. William Henderson, "Some Reflections on United States Policy in Southeast Asia," in William Henderson, ed., *Southeast Asia: Problems of United States Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1963), p. 263; cf. pp. 253–254: "We shall ultimately fail to secure the basic objectives of policy in Southeast Asia until our commitment to the region becomes unlimited, which it has not been up till now. This does not mean simply that we must be prepared to fight for Southeast Asia, if necessary, although it certainly means that at a minimum. Beyond this is involved a much greater commitment of our resources. . . ."

137. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 12.

138. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. 25, d.

139. Gravel ed., III:141; Stavins, p. 93.

140. USG ed., V.B.4, p. 525; Gravel ed., II:726.

141. Robert S. Allen and Paul Scott, "Diem's War Not Limited Enough," Peoria *Journal-Star,* September 18, 1963, reprinted in *Congressional Record,* October 1, 1963, p. A6155: "Since Diem—under a plan prepared by his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu—began sending guerrillas into North Vietnam in June, powerful forces within the administration have clamored for the President to curb the strong anti-Communist leader. . . . General Paul D. Harkins, head of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Saigon, who favors the initiative by Diem's forces, violently disagreed . . . but President Kennedy accepted the diplomatic rather than the military view." Cf. Radio Hanoi, FBIS *Daily Report,* October 22, 1963, JJJ13; April 8, 1964, JJJ4.

142. Allen and Scott, *loc cit.*: "Diem also notified the White House that he was opening talks with a representative of Chiang Kai-shek on his offer to send Chinese Nationalist troops to South Vietnam from Formosa for both training and combat purposes. This . . . so infuriated President Kennedy that he authorized an undercover effort to curb control of military operations of the South Vietnam President by ousting Nhu . . . and to organize a military junta to run the war"; Hanoi Radio, November 10, 1963 (FBIS *Daily Report,* November 14, 1963, JJJ2): "The 47 U.S.-Chiang commandos captured in Hai Ninh declared that before intruding into the DRV to seek their way into China, they had been sent to South Vietnam and received assistance from the Ngo Dinh Diem authorities." Cf. USG ed., IV.C.9.b, p. vii (censored); Gravel ed., II:289–290: "GVN taste for foreign adventure showed up in small, irritating ways. . . . In 1967, we discovered that GVN had brought in Chinese Nationalists disguised as Nungs, to engage in operations in Laos." Hilsman (p. 461) relates that in January 1963 Nhu discussed with him "a strategy to defeat world Communism for once and for all—by having the United States lure Communist China into a war in Laos, which was 'an ideal theater and battleground.'" Bernard Fall confirmed that in Washington, also, one faction believed "that the Vietnam affair could be transformed into a 'golden opportunity' to 'solve' the Red Chinese problem as well" (*Vietnam Witness 1953–1966* [New York: Praeger, 1966] p. 103; cf. Hilsman, p. 311; Scott, *The War Conspiracy,* pp. 21–23, 208).

143. D. Gareth Porter, in Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, eds., *Laos: War and Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 198. An Air America plane

shot down in September 1963 carried an American pilot along with both Thai and KMT troops, like so many other Air America planes in this period. The political assassinations of April 1963, which led to a resumption of fighting, have been frequently attributed to a CIA-trained assassination team recruited by Vientiane Security Chief Siho Lamphoutacoul, who was half Chinese (Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, p. 36). After Siho's coup of April 19, 1964, which ended Laotian neutralism and led rapidly to the U.S. air war, the *New York Times* noted of Siho that "In 1963 he attended the general staff training school in Taiwan and came under the influence of the son of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, General Chiang Ching-kuo, who had learned secret police methods in Moscow and was the director of the Chinese Nationalist security services" (*NYT*, April 27, 1964, p. 4).

144. *NYT*, November 20, 1963, p. 1: The two prisoners "said they had conducted activities against the Cambodian Government in a fortified hamlet in neighboring South Vietnam under control of U.S. military advisers. They said Radio Free Cambodia transmitters had been set up in such villages. One prisoner said he had been supplied with a transmitter by U.S. officials." For U.S. corroboration of CIA involvement in Khmer Serei operations, cf. Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, pp. 158–159.

145. A *New York Times* editorial (October 6, 1963, IV, 8), noting "long-voiced charges that our intelligence organization too often tends to 'make' policy," added that "there is an inevitable tendency for some of its personnel to assume the functions of kingmakers," in answer to its question "Is the Central Intelligence Agency a state within a state?" Cf. Washington *Daily News*, October 2, 1963, reprinted in *Congressional Record*, October 1963, p. 18602: "If the United States ever experiences a 'Seven Days in May' it will come from the CIA, and not the Pentagon, one U.S. official commented caustically. . . . People . . . are beginning to fear the CIA is becoming a third force, coequal with President Diem's regime and the U.S. government and answerable to neither."

146. Gravel ed., III:141.

147. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 25; Gravel ed., III:190.

148. Washington *Post*, November 21, 1963, A19; San Francisco *Chronicle*, November 21, 1963, p. 13; emphasis added.

149. Stavins *et al.*, pp. 93–94; cf. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii: "NSAM 273 Authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV."

150. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), p. 254 (summary by Neil Sheehan), emphasis added; cf. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 36.

151. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), pp. 331–332; cf. NSG ed., IV.C.2(c), p. 8. A similar story of good intelligence neglected is told by General Lansdale's friend and admirer, Robert Shaplen, in *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper, 1966, e.g., pp. 393–394), a work frequently cited by the Pentagon study.

152. Edward Weintal and Charles Bartlett, p. 72.

153. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 441.

APPENDIX A

NSAM 273 of November 26, 1963: a partial reconstruction of the text

IV.C.1, pp. 46–47; =
Gr. III:50; Johnson,
p. 45

TO: [All the senior officers of the government responsible for foreign affairs and military policy]

[a]*object*, IV.C.1

1. It remains the central objective[a] of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy. The test

[b]*overriding objective, NYT*, Nov. 25, 1963, p. 5	of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.[b]
IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18. IV.B.3, p. 37; = Gr. II:276 [c]*objectives*, IV.B.2, p. 26; IV.B.5, p. 67. *objective*, IV.B.3, p. 37	[2.] The objectives[c] of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel remains as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.
IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr. III:19	3. It is a major interest of the United States government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself in holding and developing increased public support . . . [*NYT:* for programs directed toward winning the war].
IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18; Johnson, p. 45; IV.B.5, p. 67	[4.] The President expects that all senior officers of the government will move energetically to insure the full unity of support for established U.S. policy in South Vietnam. Both in Washington and in the field, it is essential that the government be unified. It is of particular importance that express or implied criticism of officers of other branches be assiduously avoided in all contacts with the Vietnamese government and with the press.
IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr. III:18; IV.B.5, p. 67	5. We should concentrate our efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the government of South Vietnam to concentrate its effort, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only the controlled hamlets but the productivity of this area, especially where the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces.
IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr. II:276	[6.] [Economic and military aid to the new regime should be maintained at the same levels as during Diem's rule.]
IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18	[6.] [Both military and economic programs, it was emphasized, should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime.]
Cooper, p. 224	[Johnson . . . stressed that all military and economic programs were to be kept at the levels maintained during the Diem regime.]
IV.B.3, p. 37; = Gr. II:458	[U.S. assistance programs should be maintained at levels at least equal to those under the Diem government so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage.]
IV.C.2.a, p. viii; = Gr. III:117	[7?] [NSAM 273 Authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV.]

Stavins, pp. 94–95 Stavins, p. 93; = Gr. III:141; cf. IV.C.2.a, p. 2	[NSAM 273 authorized Krulak to form a committee and develop a coherent program of covert activities to be conducted during 1964, while the rest of the national security apparatus explored the feasibility of initiating a wider war against the North. . . . This NSAM provided that] . . . planning should include different levels of possible increased activity, and in each instance there should be estimates of such factors as: a. Resulting damage to NVN; b. The plausibility of denial; c. Possible NVN retaliation; d. Other international reaction.
IV.B.5, p. xxxiv (suppressed); = Gr. II: 223	[Clandestine operations against the North and into Laos are authorized.]
IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr. II:276	[And in conclusion, plans were requested for clandestine operations by the GVN against the North and also for operations up to 50 kilometers into Laos.]
Gr. III:141	[8.] [The directive also called for a plan, to be submitted for approval, for military operations] "up to a line up to 50 km. inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise" (NSAM 273).
IV.B.3, p. 37; = Gr. II:458	[Military operations should be initiated, under close political control, up to within fifty kilometers inside of Laos.]
IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr. II:276; = NYT/Bantam, p. 233	[9?] [As a justification for such measures, State was directed to develop a strong, documented case] "to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained, and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels."
Johnson, p. 45	[The NSAM also assigned various specific actions to the appropriate department or agency of government.]

APPENDIX B

Clues to the existence on November 24, 1963, of a White House paraphrase of NSAM 273 (paragraphs 1 to 4) for press purposes.

Both the *New York Times*[1] and Washington Post,[2] referring in customary terms to a White House source or sources, printed paraphrases of NSAM 273's first (i.e., more innocuous and misleading) page, and these paraphrases share certain divergences from the official text. These shared divergences suggest the existence of an intermediary written archetype, a background paper for the use of certain preferred correspondents. (The *Times* paraphrase was printed in a story by E. W. Kenworthy, who later helped write and edit the New York Times/Bantam Pentagon Papers.)

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[1] *NYT*, November 25, 1963, p. 5.

[2] Washington *Post*, November 25, 1963, A2.

Sample Divergences:

NSAM 273(1)	It remains the central objective of the United States
Washington Post	central point of United States policy remains
New York Times	central point of United States policy remains
NSAM 273(1)	contribution to this purpose
Washington Post	directed toward that objective
New York Times	contribution to this overriding objective
NSAM 273(4)	senior officers . . . move . . . to insure the full unity of support
Washington Post	all Government agencies . . . complete unity of purpose
New York Times	All agencies . . . full unity of purpose

The press reports of this paraphrase suggest that the closing words of NSAM 273(3), as quoted in USG ed., IV.C.3 (p. 3), may have been suppressed; and that the increased "public support" referred to was not in fact political but military:

NYT, November 25, 1963, p. 5: "development of public support for programs directed toward winning the war."

San Francisco *Chronicle* (AP and UPI), November 25, 1963, p. 5: "to develop public support for its policies aimed at winning the war against the Communist Viet Cong."

Los Angeles *Times,* November 25, 1963, p. 6: "development of programs to oppose the Viet Cong."

AP, as quoted by Peking Radio, November 25, 1963 (FBIS *Daily Report,* November 26, 1963, BBB4): "consolidate its position and win public support for the policy mapped out by it, in order to win the war against the Vietnamese Communists."

NSAM 273(3), as quoted in USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 3: "the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself in holding and developing increased public support."

APPENDIX C

Honolulu Conference Report and NSAM 273

	HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT		NSAM 273
IV.B.4, p. 25; = Gr. II:190 Sylvester and Manning, Wash. *Post,* Nov. 21, 1963, A19: "North Vietnam Communists"	"an encouraging outlook for the *principal objective* of joint U.S.-Vietnamese policy in South Vietnam—the *successful* prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong communists."	Johnson, p. 45; IV.C.1, pp. 46–47; = Gr. III:50	(1) "It remains the *central objective* of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country *to win* their contest against the externally directed and supported conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose."
IV.B.4, p. 25; = Gr. II:190	Lodge . . . advocated continuing to pursue the *goal* of setting dates for phasing out U.S. activities . . . and he volunteered that the announced withdrawal of 1000 troops . . . was already having a salutary effect.	IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18	(2) "The *objectives* of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963."
IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18	Lodge . . . was on the whole optimistic, and even mentioned that the statement on U.S. military withdrawal was having a continued "tonic" effect on the Republic of Vietnam.		
IV.B.4, p. 25; = Gr. II:190	[Harkins:] All *plans* for the U.S. phasing out were to go ahead as scheduled.		

HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT		NSAM 273	
IV.B.4, p. d; = Gr. II:170	In this light, officials agreed that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six months directed by McNamara in October) should be maintained.		
IV.C.9.a, pp. 4–5; = Gr. II:306	Lodge . . . : "The U.S. press should be induced to leave the new government alone. . . . Extensive press criticism, at this juncture, could be disastrous.	IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr. III:19	(3) It is a major interest of the United States government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in *consolidating* itself in holding and developing increased *public support*.
IV.B.5, p. 66; = Gr. II:275	Lodge voiced his optimism about the actions taken thus far by the new government to *consolidate* its *popular support* . . . to enlist the support of the . . . sects, and to consolidate and strengthen the strategic hamlet program.		
IV.C.1, p. 14; = Gr. III:27	When Gen. Harkins presented a summary of the situation in 13 critical provinces, 7 were in the Delta. Secretary McNamara . . . suggested that there were three things to be done in the Delta: (1) to get the Chieu Hoi program moving; (2) to get the fertilizer program going . . . , and (3) most important, to improve the security of strategic hamlets by arming and training and increasing the numbers of the militia.	IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr. III:18	(5) "We should concentrate our efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the government of South Vietnam to concentrate its effort, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only the controlled hamlets but the productivity of this area, espe-

	HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT			NSAM 273
Time, Nov. 29, 1963, p. 40	A hardly surprising agreement to intensify anti-guerrilla operations in South Vietnam's rice bowl, a wedge-shaped section of the Mekong Delta. Another decision: to revise the government's strategic-hamlet program.			cially where the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces."
IV.C.9.a, p. 2; = Gr. II:304	Lodge said it was essential "to provide some increase in overall level of economic aid. . . . It is in my view politically unacceptable and psychologically impossible to tell Big Minh that he is going to get less than Diem."	IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr. III:18. cf. IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr. II:276	[6]	[Both military and economic programs, it was emphasized, should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime.]
		IV.B.3, p. 37; = Gr. II:458		[U.S. assistance programs should be maintained at levels *at least equal to those under the Diem government* so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage.]
IV.B.5, p. 66; = Gr. II:275	Lodge . . . urged the conferees not to press too much on the government too soon, either in the way of military and economic programs, nor steps to democratize and constitutionalize the country. His second major point was the psychological and political, as well as economic, need for U.S. aid to the new government in *at least the amount of our aid to Diem*, and preferably more. . . . What was required was greater motivation. McNamara immediately disagreed, saying that . . . the piaster deficit problem . . . was endangering all the programs, and that both AID and MAP were in need of increased funding. Concurring in this view, AID Admin-			

HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT

	istrator Bell agreed to review the entire AID program.
IV.C.2.a, p. 2; = Gr. III:150	In May of 1963 . . . the JCS directed CINCPAC to prepare a plan for GVN "hit and run" operations against NVN. These operations were to be "non-attributable" and carried out "with U.S. military materiel, training and advisory assistance." Approved by the JCS on 9 September as CINCPAC OPLAN 34–63, the plan was discussed during the Vietnam policy conference at Honolulu, 20 November 1963. Here a decision was made to develop a combined COMUSMACV-CAS, Saigon plan for a 12-month program of covert operations.
Gr: III:141	*9 Sep 1963* JCS approve CINCPAC OPLAN 34–63, which called for MACV and CAS, Saigon to provide advice and assistance to the GVN in certain operations against NVN. . . . *Apparently, the plan was not forwarded to the White House by SecDef.*

NSAM 273

IV.C.2.a, p. viii; = Gr. III:117	[7?]	[NSAM 273 Authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV.]

14. The Pentagon Papers and the United States Involvement in Laos

by Walt Haney

I. INTRODUCTION

> We incur hundreds of thousands of U.S. casualties [in Indochina] because we are opposed to a closed society. We say we are an open society, and the enemy is a closed society.
>
> Accepting that premise, it would appear logical for them not to tell their people; but it is sort of a twist on our basic philosophy about the importance of containing Communism. Here we are telling Americans they must fight and die to maintain an open society, but not telling our people what we are doing. That would seem the characteristic of a closed society. We are fighting a big war in Laos, even if we do not have ground troops there. Testimony for 3 days has been to that effect, yet we are still trying to hide it not only from the people but also from the Congress.
>
> —Senator Stuart Symington[1]

Many times in years past, the war in Laos has been called the "forgotten war." Forgotten because the U.S. government has not been, as Senator Symington puts it, "telling our people what we are doing." Indeed, because of U.S. government secrecy, the war in Laos has been so completely forgotten that William Fulbright, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, could testify in October 1969 that he "had no idea we had a full-scale war going on" in Laos.[2] Now, after publication of the Pentagon Papers in three different versions, we have further evidence of how much Laos has been forgotten, not only by the public but by U.S. policymakers as well. For most of the last twenty years, excepting the crises of 1960 through 1963, Laos has been for the United States little more than a sideshow to the conflict in Vietnam.

Though the United States has spent billions of dollars in the Kingdom of Laos, top U.S. officials in Washington have only rarely given their attention to this small country and then only in times of military crises, or in terms of how events in Laos affect U.S. involvement in Vietnam. As one American official in Vientiane put it in 1960, "This is the end of nowhere. We can do anything we want here because Washington doesn't seem to know it exists." [3]

Because the documents in the Pentagon Papers reflect largely the views of Washington, and because they focus on Vietnam, they provide insight into only a small portion of U.S. involvement in Laos. It is the fuller account of U.S. involvement in Laos' forgotten war, both that revealed in the Pentagon Papers and that omitted from them, which we will treat in this essay.

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II. THE EARLY YEARS OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT: 1950–1954

> The course of U.S. policy was set to block further Communist expansion in Asia.
>
> —NSC 48/2
> December 30, 1949[1]

In April 1946, French troops reoccupied Vientiane and the leaders of the Lao independence movement, the Lao Issara, fled across the Mekong into Thailand. Shortly thereafter occurred what Arthur Dommen in his book *Conflict in Laos* calls "the first in a long series of contacts between the Lao Issara and Americans in territory outside Laos." [2] In that meeting in the spring of 1946, Prince Souphanouvong[3] of the Lao Issara asked OSS Major Jim Thompson for "official United States support for removal of the French from Laos." [4] There is no record, however, that the United States provided any support for the Lao independence movement. U.S. sentiments against the reimposition of French colonial rule were held in check by the fact that the strongest independence movements in Indochina displayd Communist leanings. And after the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists in 1949, and the growing conflict in Korea, U.S. ambivalence toward the French-sponsored colonial governments of Indochina gave way completely to anti-Communist sentiments. On February 3, 1950, President Truman approved a memorandum from Secretary of State Dean Acheson recommending U.S. recognition of the "three legally constituted governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia . . ." (Gravel ed., I:65). On May 1, 1950 Truman approved $10 million "for urgently needed military assistance items for Indochina" (Gravel ed., I:67). In December of that year, the United States concluded mutual defense agreements with the governments of the three French Union States of Indochina; Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.[5]

One stipulation of these agreements was that all U.S. military assistance to Indochina go directly to the French, who then controlled its distribution. Therefore, exactly how much U.S. military aid went to Laos during the period of French control, 1950–1954, is not precisely known, but has been estimated at roughly $30 million.[6] Despite the agreement to channel U.S. military assistance to Laos through the French, this period saw the first instance of direct U.S. military involvement in Laos.

In March and April of 1953 Viet Minh troops moved into northern Laos from Dien Bien Phu. They advanced down the valley of the River Ou toward Luang Prabang. In response to this threat on the Royal Capital of Laos, the United States "rushed supplies to Laos and Thailand in May 1953 and provided six C-119's with civilian crews for the airlift into Laos" (Gravel ed., I:86). This form of involvement displayed elements which were to become familiar to U.S. involvement in Laos in the next twenty years; expanded involvement as a response to crisis, the use of civilians in military and para-military operations, and the reliance on air power.

Only in 1954 after the Geneva Conference did Laos achieve true independence outside the umbrella of the French Union. For Laos, the Geneva agreements stipulated a general ceasefire, the withdrawal of Viet Minh and French Union forces and the regroupment of Pathet Lao forces in Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces pending a political settlement. Also, the agreements prohibited introduction of foreign military personnel and military advisers except for 1,500

French officers and men to train the Laotian army.[7] It was this last stipulation which was to prove most troublesome for the U.S. involvement in Laos.

III. NOTHING THAT WE DID: 1954–1958

> Our fear of communism has been so great as to be irrational. We have virtually imbued it with superhuman powers. Its very nature, in our thinking, assures its success. We fail to see that, like other political ideologies, it can only take root among a receptive population. . . . We do not consider the possibility that our antagonists in fact may be in better tune with the grievances of the people whose loyalty we seek to win, and thus have been able to promise remedies which to the latter appear realistic and just.
>
> —Roger M. Smith[1]

On October 20, 1954, barely three months after Geneva, Prince Souvanna Phouma resigned as Prime Minister of Laos. He had only just begun the difficult task of reaching a political settlement with the Pathet Lao, and the circumstances surrounding his resignation have yet to be explained completely. Most accounts link the fall of Souvanna Phouma in October 1954 to the assassination of his Minister of Defense, Kou Voravong, in September. However, years later, in 1961, Souvanna Phouma attributed his fall in 1954 to foreign interference.[2] After the Prince's resignation, a new government was formed under Katay Don Sasorith, who favored closer relations with Thailand and evidently harbored reservations on the sagacity of coalition with the Pathet Lao.[3] At any rate, talks with the Pathet Lao foundered and were broken off in April 1955. Twice more, once in the summer and once in the fall, talks between Katay and the Pathet Lao were resumed only to be broken off. During all this time the Pathet Lao resisted Royal Lao government attempts at reimposition of control over Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces. As former British military attaché to Laos Hugh Toye recounts it, "The Pathet Lao argued, against the obvious intention of the Geneva Agreement, that the provinces were theirs until a full political settlement was reached." [4]

General elections were held in December 1955 without Pathet Lao participation, but when the new assembly convened Katay found himself lacking enough support to continue as Prime Minister. Souvanna Phouma gathered support and formed a new government in March 1956, on a pledge of reconciliation with the Pathet Lao. He resumed talks with them and from August 1956 through February 1957, signed the first seven of ten agreements between the Royal Government and the Pathet Lao which came to be known as the Vientiane Agreements.[5] Souvanna Phouma's efforts at reconciliation with the Pathet Lao were interrupted in May 1957 when upon receiving only a qualified vote of confidence in the National Assembly, he resigned. However, after an extended period of confusion, when no other leaders were able to muster enough support to form a government, Souvanna Phouma returned as Prime Minister in August. He again resumed talks with the Pathet Lao and reached final agreement for the inclusion of two Pathet Lao representatives as Ministers in a new coalition cabinet.

During all of this period, the United States was by no means inactive in Laos. The chief characteristic marking all of U.S. policy in Laos throughout the 1950s was quite simply *anticommunism.* An NSC memorandum (5612/1, 5 September 1956) clearly reveals this attitude. Among the stated elements of U.S. policy toward Laos were the following:

> —In order to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-Communism, encourage individuals and groups in Laos who oppose dealing with the Communist blow. [*sic*]*
>
> —Support the expansion and reorganization of police, propaganda and army intelligence services, provided anti-Communist elements maintain, effective control of these services.
>
> —Terminate economic and military aid if the Lao Government ceases to demonstrate a will to resist internal Communist subversion and to carry out a policy of maintaining its independence.[6]

In Congressional hearings Walter S. Robertson, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs under Eisenhower, stated U.S. objectives in Laos even more bluntly;

> Our policy objectives in relation to Laos have been and are to assist the Lao:
>
> 1. In keeping the Communists from taking over Laos.
> 2. In strengthening their association with the free world; and
> 3. In developing and maintaining a stable and independent government willing and able to resist Communist aggression or subversion." [7]

For Assistant Secretary Robertson there was no question as to Laos' strategic significance:

> . . . when you look at the map you will see that Laos is a finger thrust right down into the heart of Southeast Asia. And Southeast Asia is one of the prime objectives of the international Communists in Asia because it is rich in raw materials and has excess food. We are not in Laos to be a fairy godfather to Laos, we are in there for one sole reason, and that is to try to keep this little country from being taken over by the Communists. . . . It is part of the effort we are making for the collective security of the free world. Every time you lose a country, every time you give up to them, they become correspondingly stronger and the free world becomes weaker.
>
> This isn't happening only in this little country of Laos, it is happening all over the world, everywhere. We are engaged in a struggle for the survival of what we call a free civilization.[8]

The only difficulty with the implementation of this policy was that under the Geneva Agreeements the United States was prohibited from establishing a military mission in Laos. An alternative possibility would have been to work through the French military mission in Laos, but such an alternative was clearly less than wholly satisfactory. As stated in a NSC memorandum (NSC 5429/2, 20 August 1954) on Indochina policy, the United States should work "through the French only insofar as necessary. . . ." [9] This obstacle was overcome in January 1956 when the United States established a military mission, but called it by a different name—a Program Evaluation Office (PEO) attached to the U.S. aid mission. There is little doubt that the PEO violated the spirit if not the letter of the Geneva Agreements. PEO clearly served as the functional equivalent of a military advisory group. For example, the chief of PEO from February 1957 to February 1959 was Brigadier General Rothwell H. Brown, U.S. Army (retired). Before coming to Laos, Brown had served as chief of the Army section in the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Pakistan, as deputy chief of MAAG South Vietnam, and as chief of MAAG Pakistan. After retiring from the last position in 1956, he was "asked by Admiral Radford and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in November 1956" to go to Laos on an inspection tour and shortly thereafter he was appointed as chief of PEO Laos.[10] Indeed, the PEO ploy was so obvious that even the U.S. State Department on one occasion in 1957 forgot the pretense and listed Laos as one of the "countries where MAAG personnel are stationed." [11]

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*Throughout this paper explanatory comments added to quotations will be placed within brackets.

In addition to the military mission, U.S. involvement was growing in other realms. A United States Operations Mission (USOM) had been established in Vientiane in January 1955 and in July of that year an agreement was reached with the Katay government on new economic aid and an increase in military assistance. The aid program mushroomed to such an extent that from 1955 through 1958 U.S. aid to Laos totaled approximately $167 million.[12] The bulk of this aid went for support of the army of Laos, "the only country in the world where the United States supports the military budget 100%. . . ." [13] Yet it was clear that U.S. interests in Laos were suffering. Souvanna Phouma's negotiations with the Pathet Lao evidenced a Laotian veering away from "pro-Western neutrality," and with the scheduling of elections in May 1958, U.S. officials were clearly worried.

Despite the magnitude of the U.S. aid program very little of it ever trickled down to reach the average Laotian peasant. In December 1957, with the discovery of import irregularities in the U.S. commodity import program, U.S. aid was briefly withheld. One authority recounts that the aid abuses served as a "pretext for disciplining the Laotian government." [14] What clearly upset U.S. officials was Souvanna Phouma's flirtation with the Communists, and this as much as anything prompted the aid cutoff. Indeed, if corruption had been the real reason for "disciplining the Laotian Government," many American officials ought also to have been disciplined. For corruption was by no means limited to the Laotian side of the aid program. As a U.S. House Government Operations Committee later reported:

1. One U.S. aid officer "accepted bribes totaling at least $13,000" for helping a construction company "secure lucrative contracts and overlooking deficiencies in their performance."
2. The former USOM director sold his inoperable 1947 Cadillac to the head of the same construction company at an inflated price and shortly thereafter the car was "cut up and the pieces dropped down an abandoned well."
3. The former director's testimony before the Committee on Government Operations was "misleading and conflicting."
4. The same USOM director was charged with violating aid contract regulations "in several respects" including "writing two contracts for one job" and writing a contract which included "a provision that the contractor . . . was not required to complete any work under the contract." [15]

When confronted with the charges of their corruption the aid officials "sought to excuse deficiencies and maladministration in the aid program in Laos . . .

with the assertion that our aid program, however poorly administered, has saved Laos from going Communist." [16]

The exposure in public testimony of corruption among U.S. aid officials no doubt made it more difficult thereafter, or at least more embarrassing, for the U.S. mission to object too strenuously when Laotian officials siphoned off their own share of aid money and cried communist "Wolf!" to divert attention. After all, such officials could claim, they were only learning from the Americans!

The real battle, though, was not against corrupt officials. The main task was preventing a "Communist takeover." Such an aim had intrinsic value for U.S. policymakers but also was geared toward preventing the spread of insurgency into neighboring Thailand. An Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) Report on Southeast Asia, 28 May 1958, recounted the setbacks for the United States in this struggle:

> The formation in November, 1957 of a coalition cabinet with Communist Pathet Lao participation, additional communist gains of places in army and civil service, and permission for the Pathet to operate as a legal political party throughout the country, were generally considered as a setback for U.S. objectives.[17]

With the scheduling of special elections for May 1958 to include Pathet Lao participation, U.S. officials were fearful. A Congressional report summed up the situation:

> In the fall of 1957, with an awareness of the forthcoming elections, Ambassador Parsons contemplated the cumulative results of the U.S. aid program to date. He was concerned with the possibility that its shortcomings might become election issues for the Communists.
>
> He was apparently impressed by the aid program's obvious neglect of the needs of the typical Lao, the rural villager or farmer. In an effort to remedy this shortcoming, the Ambassador conceived Operation Booster Shot.[18]

Operation Booster Shot was an emergency attempt to extend the impact of the U.S. aid program into rural Laos. Clearly inspired by the upcoming elections, it was an early version of "winning hearts and minds." The Operation included well-digging, irrigation projects, repair of schools, temples and roads; altogether more than ninety work projects. Incredibly, the program also included the air dropping of "some 1,300 tons of food, medical and construction supplies and other useful supplies" [19] into areas inaccessible by road. One Congressman rather undiplomatically referred to the latter aspect of the program as "drop[ping] a flock of supplies in the jungle." [20] The Congressman cited "one airplane pilot who participated in the airdrop who thought what he was supposed to do was haphazard." [21] But as Assistant Secretary Robertson put it,

> This was a crash program. Such a program, we felt, would do much to counter the anticipated vigorous Communist campaign in the villages and the growing criticism that American aid benefits the few in the cities and fails to reach the rural population.[22]

Yet despite the crash nature of the Booster Shot program and the expense which "may have exceeded $3 million," [23] the operation failed to succeed. In the May elections, nine out of thirteen Pathet Lao candidates won seats in the National Assembly. Additionally, four candidates of the neutralist Santiphab (Peace) party, or as they were called by U.S. Ambassador to Laos Graham Parsons, "the fellow travelers," won election.[24] Thus "Communists or fellow travelers" had won thirteen out of twenty-one seats contested. Also, Prince Souphanouvong, leader of the Pathet Lao, standing for election in the capital province of Vientiane, won more votes than any other candidate in the elections. A few days after the May 4 elections, when the new National Assembly convened, Souphanouvong was elected Chairman.[25]

Interpretations concerning the reasons behind the Pathet Lao electoral successes varied widely. The OCB Report maintained that the "Communists' show of strength . . . resulted largely from the conservatives failure to agree on a minimum consolidated list of candidates." [26] The conservatives had run a total of eighty-five candidates for the twenty-one contested positions. A Laotian official, Sisouk Na Chanpassak, who is the current Laotian Minister of Finance gave a different reason:

> Black market deals in American aid dollars reached such proportions that the Pathet Lao needed no propaganda to turn the rural people against the townspeople.[27]

Yet whatever the vote was against, it also was a vote for the Pathet Lao. They had organized well for the election. Former Pathet Lao soldiers and cadres acted as grass-roots campaigners and, in contrast to the Laotian government officials, they were honest. As Hugh Toye, former British military attaché to Laos, described them, "they behaved with propriety, with respect for tradition, and with utmost friendliness as far as the people were concerned. Their soldiers were well-disciplined and orderly like [their mentors] the Viet Minh. . . ." [28]

The electoral victories clearly gave the Pathet Lao added authority in the coalition government. United States reaction was quick to follow. First, the CIA helped to organize a group of young conservatives, the Committee for the Defense of National Interests (CDNI), in opposition to Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma.[29] Second, on June 30, the United States again shut off aid to Laos. As Roger Hilsman, who served as Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and later as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in the Kennedy Administration, later wrote,

> . . . by merely withholding the monthly payment to the troops, the United States could create the conditions for toppling any Lao government whose policies it opposed.[30]

Surely enough on July 23, in a National Assembly vote, Souvanna Phouma's government was toppled. One observer charged that the United States paid huge sums for votes against Souvanna,[31] and another maintains that the CIA was "stage-managing the whole affair." [32] Whatever the exact circumstances, the United States was clearly and deeply implicated in the fall of Souvanna Phouma in 1958 as again it would be in 1960.

Yet in a height of pretense bordering on the absurd, Assistant Secretary Robertson, when asked in Congressional hearings whether the United States had done anything to cause the "coalition of the non-Communist elements in the Government which was successful in getting rid of the Communist ministers," answered, "Nothing that we did, no." [33] Such innocence is all the more remarkable in light of Robertson's testimony on the formation of coalition government. Former Ambassador Parsons had testified "I struggled for sixteen months to prevent a coalition government." Robertson elaborated,

> . . . there is no difference whatsoever in our evaluation of the threat to Laos which was posed by this coalition. That is the reason we did everything we could to keep it from happening.[34]

The U.S. did "everything we could" to prevent the coalition government, but when it fell, "Nothing that we did, no."

IV. ANTI-COMMUNIST, PRO–FREE WORLD NEUTRALITY

After Souvanna Phouma lost the July 23 vote of confidence in the National Assembly, he still tried to form a new government, but CIA agents "had persuaded the CDNI to oppose Souvanna" [1] and his attempt failed. On August 18, Phoui Sananikone gathered enough support to form a government. His cabinet excluded the two Pathet Lao ministers who had been in Souvanna's government, but did include four CDNI members who were not members of the National Assembly.[2] The coalition government was broken.

Phoui soon demonstrated his own brand of neutrality. He established relations with Nationalist China and upgraded the Lao mission in Saigon to embassy status. After agreements on reforms in the aid program and devaluation of the Laotian currency in October, the United States resumed aid to Laos. Then in January 1959, U.S. aid to Laos was increased.

In December, Phoui seized upon the occurrence of a skirmish between Laotian and DRV soldiers in the region near the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam to charge North Vietnam with initiating a campaign against Laos "by acts of intimidation of all sorts, including the violation and occupation of its territory." [3] The validity of the charges was questionable, but Phoui nevertheless used the incident as a pretext to request emergency powers from the National Assembly.[4] On January 15, he was granted emergency powers for one year. On the same day, he reshuffled his cabinet to include for the first time three army officers who were also CDNI members. On February 11, Phoui declared that Laos was no longer bound by the Geneva Conventions or the limitations on acceptance of foreign military aid.[5] As the government became more conservative, now including seven CDNI members, purges were initiated against Pathet Lao officials and sympathizers.[6] In the meantime, two Pathet Lao battalions awaited integration into the Royal Lao Army, as called for in the agreements reached earlier between Souvanna Phouma and the Pathet Lao. In early May details of the integration were agreed upon, but at the last minute on May 11 the two battalions, fearing a trick by the increasingly anti-Communist Phoui government, refused to comply with the plan.[7] Thereupon, Phoui ordered Prince Souphanouvong and the other Pathet Lao leaders in Vientiane arrested, and commanded the Royal Army to encircle the two recalcitrant PL battalions. He then issued an ultimatum to the PL troops; either they be integrated into the Royal Army immediately or be disbanded. The First Battalion complied, the Second did not. Toye relates their escape:

> On the night of 18 May, the whole seven hundred men, complete with their families, their chickens, pigs, household possessions and arms slipped

> out of their camp on the Plain of Jarres and followed a long-planned route to an isolated valley near the North Vietnamese border some forty-five miles away." [8]

An OCB Report on Southeast Asia, 12 August 1959, commented:

> the Lao Army displayed a disappointing lack of capacity to control a small scale internal security problem when it permitted the battalion to escape.[9]

The Royal Lao government, incensed, declared the Pathet Lao troops would be considered deserters. The coalition government, if only broken earlier, was clearly shattered now.

In July the Royal Lao government (RLG) reported Communist guerrilla attacks in the north.[10] A Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE 68-2-59, 18 September 1959) later analyzed the situation as follows:

> 7. We believe that the initiation of Communist guerrilla warfare in Laos in mid-July was primarily a reaction to a series of actions by the Royal Lao Government which threatened drastically to weaken the Communist position in Laos. For a period of about one year after the November 1957 political agreements between the Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao, the Communist controlled party in Laos—the Neo Lao Hak Zat—attempted to move by legal political competition toward its objective of gaining control of Laos. The Laotian Government had taken counteraction which checked this effort. Moreover, the U.S. had stepped up its activities to strengthen the Laotian Government, notably through the decision to send military training teams, and clearly was increasing its presence in Laos. The Communist advance in Laos was losing impetus. To the Communist world, the future probably appeared to be one of increasing political repression, declining assets, and a strengthened anti-Communist position in the country.[11]

The onus of blame for the resumption of hostilities clearly lay with the Phoui Sananikone government,[12] and indirectly with the United States.

Throughout the year the tension and particularly the rhetoric of crisis heightened. One particularly notable, though perhaps not atypical example of the exaggerated air of crisis is recounted by Bernard Fall. On August 24, 1959, the *New York Times* titled a story on Laos with the alarming report "Laos Insurgents Take Army Post Close to Capital." As Fall points out, the headline should have read "Rain Cuts Laos Vegetable Supply," for there had in fact been no attack. The whole story had mushroomed out of a washed-out bridge which had caused a cutoff in traffic to Vientiane and thus prevented the daily vegetable supply from coming through. The story of the attack on the outpost had been built from speculation as to the cause of the cutoff in traffic! [13]

Although the U.S. did expand the PEO group in July and in August increased aid to Laos, direct military intervention was avoided. In September, the RLG reported Communist attacks on Sam Neua and again charged North Vietnam with aggression, but this time the charges were presented before the United Nations.[14] The secret U.S. government SNIE of September 18, 1959, acknowledged, however, that there was "no conclusive evidence of participation by North Vietnamese," [15] and a UN team of observers reached very much the same conclusion later in September.[16] After these setbacks in gaining additional international support in his battle against the Communists, Phoui considered reorganizing his cabinet. The move was resisted by CDNI members who reportedly were advised to do so by the CIA.[17] Then in December, army General Phoumi Nosavan and other CDNI members called for Phoui's resignation and sent troops to surround his house. On December 30, Phoui resigned.

Phoumi Nosavan was now clearly the darling of the CIA. Both CIA and the Program Evaluatoin Office were backing him for Prime Minister.[18] Phoumi had been a member of the Lao Issara in the late 1940s and as such had been a close companion of Souphanouvong[19] but by the late fifties had become a staunch anti-Communist. His early role as such had been questioned by some on the basis of his early association with Souphanouvong, but by 1959 the CIA believed in him enough to back him in his move against the Phoui Sananikone government. At this point the CIA clearly had a strong hand in formulating and directing U.S. policy in Laos, even though sometimes opposed by the State Department. As Hilsman described it,

> where the State Department, for example, at one time had three people on its Laos desk, the CIA had six. This meant that the CIA could always afford to be represented at an inter-departmental meeting, that it could spare the manpower to prepare papers that would dominate the meeting, and that it could explore the byways and muster the information and arguments that gave its men authority at those meetings.[20]

Nevertheless, despite CIA backing, Phoumi was not named Prime Minister and instead the King appointed a caretaker government until the elections scheduled for April 1960. In the meantime, however, Phoumi, holding the position of Minister of Defense and Veteran Affairs, remained dominant in the government. It appears from the Pentagon Papers that the United States, having finally brought staunch anti-Communists to power, may have received more than it bargained for. An OCB Report on Southeast Asia, 10 February 1960, noted that

> Our problem in the last few months has not been "to strengthen the determination of the RLG to resist subversion" or "to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-communism." Without minimizing the importance of these objectives, our immediate operational problem has been to persuade the Lao leadership from taking too drastic actions which might provoke a reaction on the part of the North Vietnamese and which might alienate free-world sympathy for Laos—as for instance, outlawing and eliminating by force the NLHX or taking a hard anti-communist position in international affairs.[21]

In January 1960 an American reporter had observed, "If free elections were held today in Laos, every qualified observer including the American Embassy, concedes this hermit kingdom would go Communist in a landslide." [22] Yet in the April 1960 election the Pathet Lao were soundly defeated. The explanation, of course, was that the elections were completely rigged. Not only were the electoral rules rigged against PL candidates, and village headmen bribed, but also Prince Souphanouvong, the PL leader and top vote-getter in the 1958 elections, was still held under arrest and not allowed to run.[23] The manipulation of the election and the increased power of the conservative elements in the Vientiane government, no doubt made Souphanouvong fear for his safety. He and his Pathet Lao colleagues who had been languishing in jail in Vientiane for over a year decided to wait no longer. On the night of May 24, they escaped. Evidently the Pathet Lao leaders had convinced the soldiers guarding them of the validity of the PL cause, for the "guards" accompanied the PL leaders in their escape.[24]

Events moved peacefully for the next few months and the United States was evidently pleased with the new conservative government. In language reminiscent of George Orwell's "doublethink," a NSC memorandum in July noted among U.S. policy objectives in Laos, that of "helping maintain the confidence of the Royal Lao Government in its anti-Communist, pro–Free World 'neutralism.'" [25] Events in August, unique even to the remarkable world of Laotian politics, were to prove, however, that not everyone was happy with the new policy of "anti-Communist, pro–Free World neutralism."

V. YEARS OF CRISIS: 1960–1962

> So it was that by the start of 1964, after a decade of humiliating reverses and the expenditure of close to half a billion dollars, United States policy had come full circle: during the 1950s Souvanna Phouma and his plan for a neutral Laos had been opposed with all the power of the Invisible Government [the CIA]; now the United States was ready to settle for even less than it could have had five years earlier at a fraction of the cost.[1]

The events of August 1960 and the tragically needless fighting over the next two years were to bring Laos to the forefront of American attention. In all of the almost two decades of the second Indochina war this was the only time during which Laos was for the United States much more than a mere sideshow to the conflict in Vietnam. As the Pentagon Papers point out,

> For although it is hard to recall that context today, Vietnam in 1961 was a peripheral crisis. Even within Southeast Asia it received far less of the Administration's and the world's attention than did Laos. *The New York Times Index for 1961* has eight columns on Vietnam, twenty-six on Laos (Gravel ed., II:18).

The individual who precipitated the 1960 crisis was a diminutive, dedicated, Army Captain named Kong-le. Ethnically a member of a minority group from southern Laos, Kong-le was the commander of the best unit in the Royal Lao Army, the Second Paratroop Battalion. He was, as Bernard Fall put it, a "soldier's soldier," and "much too unsophisticated for playing the favorite Laotian game of political musical chairs." [2]

In the early morning hours of August 9 with General Phoumi and the entire cabinet in Luang Prabang confering with the King, Kong-le and his paratroopers, politically unsophisticated though they may have been, shocked the world and no doubt their French and American military advisers. They executed a coup d'etat and occupied all of Vientiane. A few days later Kong-le explained his motives for overthrowing the government:

> What leads us to carry out this revolution is our desire to stop the bloody civil war; eliminate grasping public servants [and] military commanders . . . whose property amounts to much more than their monthly salaries can afford; and chase away foreign armed forces as soon as possible. . . . It is

> the Americans who have bought government officials and army commanders, and caused war and dissension in our country. . . . We must help each other, drive these sellers of the fatherland out of the country as soon as possible. Only then can our country live in peace.[3]

Kong-le quickly formed a provisional committee and called on Souvanna Phouma to head a new, truly neutral government. After a vote of the National Assembly and with the King's approval, Prince Souvanna organized a new cabinet. In the meantime Phoumi Nosavan flew to his stronghold in Savannakhet. Souvanna, working once again to build a government of national union, flew to Savannakhet for talks with Phoumi, who finally agreed to join the government. In late August the Assembly, meeting in Luang Prabang, approved the new cabinet including Phoumi Nosavan as Vice-Premier and Minister of Interior. The settlement was backed by the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane and by the newly arrived U.S. Ambassador, Winthrop Brown, who was convinced of Souvanna's neutrality. However, other more conservative forces were at work in the U.S. government, and in September, Brown was instructed to find a substitute for Souvanna Phouma who was pro-Western.[4] While the Embassy delayed and evidently fought for the support of Souvanna, the CIA and the U.S. military advisers of PEO turned once again to their protégé—Phoumi Nosavan.

After the agreement with Souvanna in Luang Prabang, Phoumi had returned not to Vientiane but once again to his headquarters at Savannakhet. On September 10, despite his agreement with Souvanna, Phoumi announced the establishment of a countercoup committee against Souvanna's government and of which he was nominally a member. A week later with at least the tacit support of the United States, Thailand instituted a blockade on Vientiane. Nevertheless, a flood of supplies including those intended for Vientiane continued to pour in to Phoumi's forces at Savannakhet.[5] Additionally, despite a promise to Souvanna to the contrary, two hundred Laotian paratroops who had been training in Thailand under U.S. sponsorship were turned over to General Phoumi.[6] Souvanna Phouma pleaded with U.S. officials to discontinue the blockade, but no help was forthcoming. Finally he turned to the Soviet Union for help. On October 1 Souvanna announced his approval for the establishment of a Soviet Embassy in Vientiane. His announcement only confirmed U.S. suspicions of his pro-Communist tendencies. Indeed, this assessment had proved in effect to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Calling him pro-Communist, the United States refused him help. In desperation, he turned to the Soviet Union for aid, thus "proving" the original assessment of his pro-Communist tendencies. Nevertheless, a U.S. delegation was dispatched to Vientiane in October to talk with Souvanna. In effect the delegation, including former Ambassador Parsons, demanded that the Prince abandon his policy of neutrality.[7] Souvanna refused. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. decided that "Souvanna must go." [8] As it was to happen again in Vietnam just three years later, the United States decided that a legally constituted government "must go."

In the meantime U.S. aid had continued to pour into Savannakhet for Phoumi's forces. In mid-December, "with plans drawn up by his American advisers," [9] General Phoumi marched on Vientiane. A tragically bloody battle followed which inflicted as many as 500 civilian casualties.[10] Greatly outnumbered, Kong-le's forces withdrew to the north. With Vientiane and Luang Prabang controlled by Phoumist forces, the King on December 13 named Prince Boun Oum to form a new government. The United States quickly recognized the Boun Oum government (almost three weeks before it was approved by the National Assembly) and on December 17, in a remarkable distortion of the truth, declared that "the responsibility for the present fratricidal war in Laos . . . rests squarely and solely upon the Soviet Government and its partners." [11]

By this time the conflict had become potentially explosive. The Soviet Union had been airlifting supplies to the forces of Kong-le since early December, and in January 1961, the United States provided Phoumi with a half dozen AT-6 Harvard trainers adapted as light fighter-bombers. Additionally the United States sent in 400 Special Forces troops organized into "White Star teams." One team was assigned to each of Phoumi Nosavan's battalions. As the Pentagon Papers now reveal, "The 'White Star teams' used in Laos . . . had the purpose and effect of establishing U.S. control over foreign forces" (Gravel ed., II:464). Nevertheless, Phoumi's forces continued to perform abysmally. On December 31, Kong-le's forces captured the Plaine des Jarres from the rightists and began receiving regular supplies flown into the Plaine via the Soviet airlift. Also, by this time Kong-le had entered into a de facto alliance with the Pathet Lao.[12] In an attempt to explain away the rout of their troops on December 31, the Boun Oum/Phoumi government claimed the intervention of seven North Vietnamese battalions. The charge later proved to be a complete fabrication.[13] The Kong-le/Pathet Lao forces, though numerically inferior, had proved more than a match for the Phoumist forces.[14] The Pentagon Papers, commenting on the situation at that time, note "it turned out that the neutralist/communist forces were far more effective than those favored by the U.S., and so it became clear that only by putting an American army into Laos could the pro-Western faction be kept in power" (Gravel ed., II:22).

On January 19, 1961, in a conference on Laos, President Eisenhower briefed President-elect Kennedy on the situation in Laos:

> President Eisenhower said with considerable emotion that Laos was the key to the entire area of Southeast Asia. He said that if we permitted Laos to fall, then we would have to write off all the area. He stated that we must not permit a Communist take-over. He reiterated that we should make every effort to persuade member nations of SEATO or the ICC to accept the burden with us to defend the freedom of Laos.
>
> As he concluded these remarks, President Eisenhower stated it was imperative that Laos be defended. He said that the United States should accept this task with our allies, if we could persuade them, and alone if we could not. He added that "our unilateral intervention would be our last desperate hope" in the event we were unable to prevail upon the other signatories to join us.
>
> At one time it was hoped that perhaps some type of arrangement could be made with Kong Le. This had proved fruitless, however, and President Eisenhower said "he was a lost soul and wholly irretrievable."
>
> . . . This phase of the discussion was concluded by President Eisenhower in commenting philosophically upon the fact that the morale existing in the democratic forces in Laos appeared to be disappointing. He wondered aloud why, in interventions of this kind, we always seem to find that the morale of the Communist forces was better than that of the democratic forces. His explanation was that the Communist philosophy appeared to produce a sense of dedication on the part of its adherents, while there was not the same sense of dedication on the part of those supporting the free forces (Gravel ed., II:636–637).[15]

The new Administration, however, delayed action on Laos. In late January, Kennedy set up a Task Force to review American policy in Laos.[16] In the meantime the Kong-le/Pathet Lao forces had consolidated their position on the Plaine des Jarres and in early March attacked the Sala Phou Khoun junction on the road from Vientiane to Luang Prabang. Again the Phoumist troops, despite their American advisers, panicked and fled.[17] To the United States the crisis appeared to be nearing explosive proportions. In Washington, according to one participant, the meetings on the Laotian crisis were "long and agonizing." [18] Various proposals for intervention were discussed. One called for American paratroops to seize and occupy the Plaine des Jarres. Another called for the occupation of the panhandle in southern Laos and the Vientiane Plain by 60,000 troops.[19] The Laos task force also developed a contingency plan containing seventeen steps of escalation. Nevertheless, the new President still temporized. Without actually ordering any U.S. troops to Laos, he put U.S. Marines in Okinawa on alert for possible intervention and dispatched helicopters and supplies to Thai bases near Laos. By March 24, Kennedy seems to have decided to pursue a diplomatic rather than military solution to the crisis. On that day Kennedy appeared on nationwide television and declared:

> I want to make it clear to the American people and to all of the world that all we want in Laos is peace and not war, a truly neutral government and not a cold war pawn, a settlement concluded at the conference table and not on the battlefield (Gravel ed., II:800).

In the same month progress did develop on the diplomatic front. The United Kingdom called for a new Geneva Convention on Laos. And on April 24, Russia joined Britain in calling for an armistice in Laos and a reconvention of the Geneva Conference. In the same week opinion in the U.S. government became much more amenable to a diplomatic settlement, for it was during the week of April twentieth that the blunder of the Bay of Pigs invasion became known. A Kennedy aide later quoted the President as having said "Thank God the Bay of Pigs happened when it did. Otherwise we'd be in Laos by now—and that would be a hundred times worse." [20] Nevertheless, with Pathet Lao/Neutralist forces gaining ground throughout Laos—as Toye says "gain[ing] as much cheap territory as they could" [21]—some people within the U.S. government still spoke of U.S. intervention. On April 29, Secretary of Defense McNamara talked of landing U.S. forces in Vientiane and declared that "we would have to attack the DRV if we gave up Laos." [22] The possibility of overt U.S. intervention in Laos was not yet dead. The Pentagon Papers reveal that in a May 1 meeting on Laos, Kennedy "deferred any decision on putting troops into Laos," but instead approved "a cable alerting CINCPAC to be ready to move 5000-men task forces to Udorn, Thailand, and to Touraine (Da Nang), South Vietnam. . . . The alert was intended as a threat to intervene in Laos if the communists failed to go through with the cease fire which was to precede the Geneva Conference" (Gravel ed., II:41–42). This meeting seems to have been the last time, at least for this crisis, at which overt intervention was considered. The United States had backed into the decision to seek a political settlement on grounds which were completely functional;

1. The Phoumist forces, the only alternative to negotiated settlement or U.S. military intervention had repeatedly demonstrated their abysmal fighting capabilities.[23]

2. The Pentagon opposed limited-scale intervention in an Asian land-war and particularly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco were reluctant to approve intervention which was restricted "in terms of either territory or the weapons to be used." [24]
3. The United States at the time simply did not have the strategic reserves necessary to mount a massive intervention.[25]
4. U.S. Congressional leaders "had no stomach for further military adventures." [26]
5. Major allies of the United States resisted intervention;[27] and
6. There was no conclusive evidence of North Vietnamese troop involvement, which could have served as a pretext for a major U.S. intervention.[28]

As Dommen put it, "the 'decision' to accept a coalition in Laos was virtually thrust upon the Kennedy Administration." [29]

Although Kennedy had thus "rejected" overt military intervention he did not shy away from covert operations. In a NSC meeting on April 29, only two weeks before the opening of the second Geneva Conference he approved plans to "dispatch agents to North Vietnam" for sabotage and harassment and to infiltrate commando teams into Southeast Laos (Gravel ed., II:640–641).[30] A July report by counterinsurgency expert Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale told of other covert operations in Laos:

> About 9,000 Meo tribesmen have been equipped for guerrilla operations, which they are now conducting with considerable effectiveness in Communist-dominated territory in Laos. . . . Command control of Meo operations is exercised by the Chief CIA Vientiane with the advice of Chief MAAG Laos. The same CIA paramilitary and U.S. military teamwork is in existence for advisory activities (9 CIA operations officers, 9 LTAG/Army Special Forces personnel in addition to the 99 Thai PARU [Police Aerial Resupply Unit] under CIA control) and aerial resupply (Gravel ed., II:646).

In an aura of Orwellian doublethink Lansdale continues:

> There is also a local veteran's organization and a grass-roots political organization in Laos, both of which are subject to CIA direction and control and are capable of carrying out propaganda, sabotage and harassment operations (Gravel ed., II:647).

Did the renowned counterinsurgency expert really believe that a grass-roots political organization could be "subject to CIA direction and control"? This doublethink reflects the dilemma of much of the U.S. involvement in Indochina. U.S. leaders knew theoretically that to be effective, an organization had to have grass-roots support. Yet viscerally they also wanted control.

The fact that the United States did not directly intervene in Laos had repercussions with many allies. Vice-President Lyndon Johnson noted after his trip through Southeast Asia in May 1961:

> There is no mistaking the deep—and long lasting—impact of recent developments in Laos. Country to country, the degree differs but Laos has created doubt and concern about intentions of the United States throughout

> Southeast Asia. No amount of success at Geneva can, of itself, erase this. The independent Asians do not wish to have their own status resolved in like manner in Geneva. Sarit and Ayub more or less accept that we are making "the best of a bad bargain" at Geneva. Their charity extends no further (Gravel ed., II:56).

Diem expressed his sentiments along this line directly to President Kennedy in a May 15 letter: "the recent developments in Laos have emphasized our grave concern for the security of our country with its long and vulnerable frontiers." [31]

Yet, despite the reservations of U.S. allies in Southeast Asia and the continuing covert operations in Laos, the conference in Geneva opened on May 16. It was to last more than a year, during which time parallel talks among the three Laotian factions continued sporadically. The chief U.S. negotiator at Geneva was the former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman. His orders from Kennedy were explicit. The President told him, "Did you understand? I want a negotiated settlement in Laos. I don't want troops put in." [32]

The early weeks of the Geneva Conference were troubled by ceasefire violations. In early June the Kong-le/Pathet Lao forces shelled a Meo guerrilla base in northern Laos[33] resulting in a five-day suspension of talks. However, after July 20, with negotiations in restricted sessions, the conference proceeded without interruptions for the rest of the year. Yet despite the ongoing talks, the United States continued to increase covert operations in Laos. On August 29, 1961, President Kennedy approved:

> An immediate increase in mobile training teams in Laos to include advisers down to the level of the company, to a total U.S. strength in this area of 500; together with an attempt to get Thai agreement to supply an equal amount of Thais for the same purpose.[34]

And on the same day he also approved:

> An immediate increase of 2,000 in the number of Meos being supported to bring the total to a level of 11,000.[35]

Among actions directed by the President on October 13 was the initiation of "guerrilla ground action including use of U.S. advisers if necessary, against aerial resupply missions in the Tcehpone area." [36]

This continuing covert military support undoubtedly contributed to what became the biggest stumbling block in the path toward a negotiated settlement of the crisis: the intransigence of the Laotian rightist faction led by Prince Boun Oum and Phoumi Nosavan. After meetings of the princely leaders of the three Laotian factions in Ban Hin Heup in October, Boun Oum rejected the division of portfolios in a proposed coalition cabinet. Then for two months he refused to meet with Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong to help work out a compromise.[37] In December Phoumi launched new military actions in central Laos east of Thakhek and in northern Laos near Muong Sai. Hugh Toye, British military attaché to Laos at that time describes Phoumi's actions. "Both were areas where his opponents could be expected to be sensitive and where probes would provoke military reactions which could then be used as excuses for delay on the political front." [38] With the rightists' intransigence becoming more apparent, Harriman persuaded his superiors that more effective persuasion was necessary. In January 1962, the U.S. withheld economic aid. On January 10, Prince Boun Oum then in Vientiane relented and announced his intentoin of returning to Geneva to resume negotiations. Two days later the United States responded with an announcement of its intention to resume aid. Phoumi Nosavan, however, proved more intransigent. In late January, the Pathet Lao mortared the town of Nam Tha in northern Laos. Their actions were a clear breach of the ceasefire, but Souphanouvong defended them by claiming that Nam Tha had been the base for probes by Phoumi's forces into Pathet Lao territory. Also the Prince complained of continuing air attacks on Pathet Lao villages.[39] Contrary to official American advice, Phoumi responded by building up his troops at Nam Tha to 5,000 by the end of January. It was again Averell Harriman, chief U.S. negotiator at Geneva, who pushed for U.S. sanctions against the buildup by Phoumi. In addition, Harriman sought and obtained the removal of the CIA station chief whom he suspected of unofficially backing Phoumi in his venture.[40] In March, Harriman himself even met with Phoumi. He told the General flatly, that "the Phoumist forces were finished in Laos if they did not agree to coalition." [41]

But the situation had already reached the threshold of crisis. In February the nervous Thais had moved troops to the Thai-Lao border. And on May 6, the crisis reached its denouement. Accounts differ as to whether there actually was a battle at Nam Tha. Apparently there was not, only the "possibility of one." [42]

Whatever the case, Phoumi's troops fled in panic toward the Mekong River town of Ban Houei Sai and crossed into Thailand. Once again Phoumi cried "Wolf!" and this time not just "North Vietnamese!" but "Chinese wolf!" Amid the panic and confusion rumor had it that an attack on Ban Houei Sai was imminent. So Phoumi's troops fled right on across the Mekong into Thailand. An American patrol, displaying rather more courage, probed back toward Nam Tha. They encountered only scattered Pathet Lao patrols, no Vietnamese or Chinese.[43] One American officer, displaying a sense of humor, undoubtedly necessary for his work as military adviser to Phoumi's troops, reported to his superiors:

> The morale of my battalion is substantially better than in our last engagement. The last time they dropped their weapons and ran. This time they took their weapons with them.[44]

General Phoumi's ploy had failed. Backed by CIA agents he had hoped to provoke a crisis which would force the United States to intervene militarily and destroy the forthcoming coalition.[45] The U.S. reaction was more restrained than Phoumi had hoped.

On June 15, in a show of force President Kennedy announced the deployment of 3,000 U.S. troops to Thailand. While contingency plans were drawn up for the "investing and holding by Thai forces with U.S. backup of Sayaboury Province (in Laos)" and for the "holding and recapture of the panhandle of Laos . . . with Thai, Vietnamese or U.S. forces" (Gravel ed., II:672–673), neither plan was implemented. Again, overt intervention was avoided while the focus for action remained with covert operations. A NSAM No. 162, June 19, 1962) recommended the increased use of third-country personnel with particular attention to

> The whole range of this concept from the current limited use of Thai and Filipino technicians in Laos to the creation of simply equipped regional forces for use in remote jungle, hill, and desert country. Such forces would

> be composed of foreign volunteers supported and controlled by the U.S. (Gravel ed., II:683).

After the Nam Tha fiasco and despite continuing covert operations, progress toward coalition came quickly. In June, the three princes reached agreement on the composition of a coalition cabinet. Seven positions were alloted to Souvanna Phouma's neutralist faction, four each to the Pathet Lao and to the rightists of Boun Oum and Phoumi. The remaining four cabinet positions went to a fourth group, the Vientiane neutralists. On July 23 the fourteen member nations of the Geneva Conference gave official sanction to the new Government of National Union.[46] Regrettably, it was to prove shortlived.

VI. THE SIDESHOW WAR, 1963–1968

> After 1963 Laos was only the wart on the hog of Vietnam.
>
> —Dean Rusk[1]

> As I have repeatedly stated here, we have no obligational commitment to Laos. . . . In fact we used to use as a rule of thumb our ability to make it (U.S. military involvement in Laos) reversable and terminate it within eight hours. It would probably take 24 hours now, but it still could be done.
>
> —William Sullivan
> Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
> and former U.S. Ambassador to Laos[2]

Despite the withdrawal of U.S. military advisers from Laos following the second Geneva conference, U.S. involvement in Laos continued to grow. The United States maintained its support of Souvanna Phouma and the guise of a coalition government, not for its own sake so much as to allow the United States to continue actions in Laos aimed at furthering American objectives in Vietnam. After 1962 a general attitude of anticommunism and a desire to prevent revolutionary hegemony in territory adjacent to Thailand continued to motivate U.S. policymakers. Yet after this time Laos, itself, was for the United States little more than a sideshow to the growing conflict in Vietnam.

The 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos gave only short and imperfect peace to the small kingdom. Different observers have laid the blame for the breakdown of the agreements variously to each of the participants in the Laotian conflict; to the United States, to the North Vietnamese, to the rightist faction in Laos and to the Pathet Lao.[3] There was, however, no corner on the market. The blame was ample, to be shared by all.

As required by the Geneva Accords, the U.S. withdrew its military advisers, totaling 666 men, from Laos by the October 7 withdrawal deadline. Roger Hilsman, a member of the Kennedy Administration involved in planning U.S. policy on Laos, later wrote,

> Harriman, especially, felt strongly that the United States could comply with both the letter and the spirit of the agreements in every detail, that its record should be absolutely clear.[4]

Hilsman, quoting Harriman, goes on to explain what prompted the adoption of this policy, "If Souvanna's government of national union breaks up, we must be sure the break comes between the Communists and the neutralists, rather than having them teamed up as they were before." [5] While the United States may have obeyed the letter of the Geneva Agreements, adherence to their spirit was questionable. The aspect of U.S. involvement after Geneva to which the Pathet Lao objected most vehemently was the continuing provision of ammunition and supplies to the CIA-organized Meo tribesmen, some of whom still lived in enclaves behind the ceasefire line in Pathet Lao–controlled territory. The United States maintained that such supplies, airdropped to the Meo, were warranted under a clause in the Agreements allowing for the introduction of war materials which "the Royal Government of Laos may consider necessary for the national defense of Laos." [6] The Pathet Lao objected to the supply flights to the Meo forces on the grounds that such flights could be legally approved only through the agreement of all three factions in the tripartite government.[7] The PL chagrin over the continuing supply of the Meo forces is understandable in light of the fact that even after Geneva the Meo forces were by no means quiescent. As Roger Hilsman wrote,

> The Meo were undoubtedly troublesome to the Communist Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese cadre. And it should also be said that there were occasions of tension in 1962 and 1963 when it was useful to have the Meo blow up a bridge or occupy a mountaintop in the deadly game of "signaling" that the United States had to play to deter the Communists from adventuring with the Geneva accords.[8]

But while the United States clearly can be held partially to blame for the failure of the 1962 Agreements, neither were the North Vietnamese guiltless. Only forty North Vietnamese advisers to the Pathet Lao were officially withdrawn after Geneva.[9] Even though their presence in Laos had never been acknowledged officially by the DRV, very probably a much larger number were involved. While some of them may have been withdrawn unofficially, it also seems likely that a substantial number remained behind after the withdrawal deadline.[10]

In light of the only partial adherence to the Geneva Agreements on the part of outside powers, it is not surprising that the three Lao factions met with little success in their attempt to form a coalition government. After the termination of the Soviet airlift to the Plaine des Jarres in November, the neutralist troops of Kong-le were left with no indepedendent source of supply. As a result they had to depend on supplies coming from North Vietnam, as did the Pathet Lao. Whether as a result of disagreement over the allocation of the supplies from North Vietnam or for some other reason, fighting broke out between the Pathet Lao and Kong-le's troops.[11] One group of neutralist troops led by Colonel Deuan Sunnalath sided with the Pathet Lao. In February 1963, neutralist Ketsana Vongsavong was assassinated in his home on the Plaine, and on April 1 the neutralist Foreign Minister in Souvanna's government, Quinim Pholsena, was assassinated in Vientiane. Shortly thereafter Prince Souphanouvong, fearing for his safety and no doubt recalling his arrest in 1959, left Vientiane for Khang Khai on the Plaine des Jarres. The prospects for a coalition were waning. Also in April the United States began supplying Kong-le's neutralist forces and renewed fighting broke out between the neutralist factions on the Plaine.

There is little evidence that the United States contributed directly to the renewal of fighting, though its initiation of supply flights to Kong-le's forces was, no doubt, viewed with alarm by the leftist forces. Nevertheless, it is clear that the United States did not persevere in its fulfillment of the Geneva Agreements with much compunction. In October 1962, the same month as the announced withdrawal of all U.S. military advisers from Laos, the American mission to Laos established a successor to the PEO, a military mission incognito, now called the Requirements Office.[12] Like the old Peo, the Requirements Office was nominally a part of the U.S. aid mission. As Stevenson points out, U.S. "Covert operations continued despite the ostensible withdrawal of all 'foreign military personnel' as provided in the Geneva agreements." [13] In June 1963, President Kennedy decided to supply the RLG with more modern T-28 aircraft and initiated a training program for Laotian pilots in Thailand early in 1964.[14] In March General Phoumi reached a secret agreement with Premier Khanh of South Vietnam to allow South Vietnamese soldiers to enter Laos in chase of enemy troops.[15] Also during this time evidence accumulated on growing DRV involvement in southern Laos in opening up the fledgling Ho Chi Minh trail.[16]

In mid-April 1964, Souvanna Phouma, Souphanouvong, and Phoumi Nosavan met on the Plaine des Jarres for talks aimed at reaching agreement on the coalition government. The primary issue discussed was the neutralization of Luang Prabang.[17] It had been proposed that the government move to that more neutral city since Vientiane was clearly in the firm control of the rightist forces. The talks foundered—largely because of Phoumi Nosavan's refusal to make significant concessions. He evidently felt that any concessions to the leftist and neutralist factions would weaken his position as leader of the rightists and feared a challenge to his role as spokesman for the group. If such were Phoumi's fears, they quickly proved well founded.

After the breakup of the talks on the Plaine, a disheartened Souvanna returned to Vientiane on April 18. The same day he announced his resignation as Prime Minister. The following day two rightist generals, Kouprasith Abhay and Siho Lamphouthacoul acted to usurp power. They executed a coup d'etat and arrested Souvanna Phouma.[18] The United States reacted quickly to the grab for power by the right-wing generals. The U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Leonard Unger, had been in Vietnam for meetings with U.S. officials there. Upon hearing of the coup he immediately flew back to Vientiane and informed Kouprasith that the United States still supported Souvanna Phouma. Threatened with a cutoff in U.S. aid, the generals, on April 23, released Souvanna and called on him to return as leader of a "coalition government." [19] While the form of the new government resembled the old coalition, the substance was clearly not the same. On May 2, Souvanna announced the merger of the rightist and neutralist factions. The partnership was lopsided at best. With the rightists in effective control Souvanna "became daily more of a figurehead in a situation over which he had little control." [20]

On May 17, the Pathet Lao began an offensive on the Plaine des Jarres against Kong-le's forces, which were by then formally under the command of the new rightist-neutralist unified General Staff.[21] In the United Nations, the United States charged the Pathet Lao with "an outright attempt to destroy by violence what the whole structure of the Geneva Accords was intended to preserve." [22] Yet from the Pathet Lao point of view, the Accords had already been shattered; by the rightist coup on April 19, by the rightist-neutralist agreements and by the continuing guerrilla actions of the Meo forces in northern Laos. The Pathet Lao subsequently charged that it was the United States who "staged" the April 19 coup.[23] Given the U.S. involvement in the toppling of Souvanna's governments in 1958 and 1960, the charge clearly had precedent. Yet as previously noted it was the intervention of U.S. Ambassador Unger and the threat of an aid cutoff which prompted the generals to return Souvanna to his position of Prime Minister. The PL charge of U.S. perfidy was, for once, groundless.

On May 21, the United States obtained Souvanna's permission to conduct reconnaissance flights over PL-held territory (Gravel ed., III:524).[24] Armed escort planes were soon added to the reconnaissance missions which were code-named YANKEE TEAM. On June 6, the Pathet Lao shot down one U.S. plane and the next day downed a second U.S. jet.[25] In retaliation, a squadron of U.S. jets attacked Pathet Lao positions on the Plaine. Apparently alarmed by Communist denunciations of the raids, Souvanna declared that he would resign unless the United States stopped the attacks. The flights were discontinued, but two days later, after meeting with Ambassador Unger, Souvanna announced the resumption of the escorted reconnaissance flights. The attack sorties by U.S. jets over northern Laos had not been announced by the U.S. government. They were first revealed by the New China News Agency. On June 17, the Washington *Post* editorialized,

> The country has come to a sad pass when it must turn to Communist China's New China News Agency for reports on covert military operations being conducted by the United States. . . . In Laos, Communist China claimed that American planes had flown attack missions against installations on the Plain of Jars. First the State Department refused comment, but soon the story leaked out in quite the form that the Communists had charged. . . . What in heaven's name does the United States think it is doing by trying to keep these air strikes secret? Does the Government really have the naivete to believe that its hand in these operations can be concealed? If it is to conduct or sponsor such raids, then let the matter be decided openly in terms of whether American interests require it. . . .[26]

Despite complaints such as the above, U.S. air operations in Laos were to continue with neither open discussions nor public knowledge of them. From June 1964 to March 1970, the U.S. government never acknowledged conducting anything more than "armed reconnaissance" flights in northern Laos.[27] Yet during this time the fighter-bomber sortie rate of U.S. planes over northern Laos reached a peak of 300 per day.[28]

Among the reasons later given for the official U.S. secrecy over its involvement in Laos was that Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma wanted it so. In testimony before the Symington Subcommittee in October 1969, William Sullivan, U.S. Ambassador to Laos from 1964 to 1969, addressed the issue. In explaining "why it is that the United States is reluctant to place on the public record through the statements of officials precise definition of what the U.S. involvement or operations in Laos have entailed," Sullivan cited an "understanding between my predecessor [Leonard Unger] and the Prime Minister of Laos . . . premised upon statements being limited, [and] admissions publicly stated being very carefully structured." [29]

Such an explanation of course implies that the Laotian Prime Minister was kept informed of U.S. operations in Laos. The Pentagon Papers make clear, however, that U.S. officials considered it desirable, but by no means essential, to keep Souvanna informed on U.S. actions. A cable from Dean Rusk to the U.S. Embassies in Saigon, Vientiane and Bangkok dated August 9, 1964, reported "Meeting today approved in principle early initiation air and limited ground operations in Laos. . . ." Rusk suggested a meeting between the respective Ambassadors to "clarify scope and timing [of] possible operations." As one of the crucial issues to be discussed at the meeting he questioned "whether we should inform Souvanna before undertaking or go ahead without him" (Gravel ed., III:524).

The Embassay in Saigon replied on August 18 that "It appears to U.S. that Souvanna Phouma should be informed at an appropriate time of the full scope of our plans and one would hope to obtain his acquiescence in the anti-infiltration actions in Laos. In any case we should always seek to preserve our freedom of action in the Laotian corridor" (Gravel ed., III:547).

The meeting between the representatives of the U.S. missions in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam to discuss implementation of the plans for crossborder ground and air operations into Laos took place on September 11 in Saigon. The group concluded that "while the Lao Government would of course know about the operations of their T-28s, Souvanna was not to be informed of GVN/U.S. operations" (Gravel ed., III: 195–196).

The reason for keeping Souvanna in the dark was quite simple. In a July 27 cable from the Embassy in Vientiane to the State Department it was noted that

> . . . fundamental attitude of Souvanna, which generally shared by Lao [is], that use of corridor, even though involving Lao territory, not primarily their problem, and anyway they have their hands full trying to protect heart of their country for defense of which corridor not essential. Our creating new military as well as international political conflict over corridor will be regarded by them as another instance Laos being involuntarily involved in struggle among big powers on matter outside Laos own prime interests (Gravel ed., III:515).

After Rusk's proposal of crossborder operations, Ambassador Unger, on August 17, reiterated Souvanna's position and also suggested a possible circumvention of the problem:

> In reply to second key question I frankly find it difficult to say in abstract how much panhandle action Souvanna could and would accept. Principal danger as already noted in earlier messages, aside from his understandable preoccupation about provoking Communist escalation, is that stepped-up action in Panhandle makes it more difficult for U.S. to enforce counsels of moderation as regards his and Lao military actions in areas of country which are of more immediate concern to them.
>
> As earlier noted I believe we could gradually establish pattern U.S. suppressive strikes in panhandle without adverse Souvanna reaction and this perhaps even truer of T-28 strikes. Even though strictly speaking suppressive strikes would not be in response to RLG request nevertheless believe Souvanna would back U.S. up if we represented them as being authorized by RLG (Gravel ed., III:541).

Via such reasoning was the decision reached that Souvanna "was not to be informed" of U.S./GVN plans for operations into Laos.

Though no plans for large-scale crossborder operations were actually implemented in the summer of 1964, small-scale operations continued in the South (Gravel ed., III:160)[30] and a major operation was mounted in the North. The small-scale GVN operations into Laos met with only limited success. A November 7 memorandum prepared by William Bundy for an interagency Vietnam Working Group noted that,

> Earlier in the year several eight-man reconnaissance teams were parachuted into Laos as part of Operation Leaping Lena. All of these teams were

> located by the enemy and only four survivors returned to RVN. As a result of Leaping Lena, Cross Border Ground Operations have been carefully reviewed . . . (Gravel ed., III:610).[31]

The operation in northern Laos, code-named Operation Triangle (also called Operation Three Arrows or Samsone) proved more successful. The operation, mounted during July of 1964, was aimed at clearing the Vientiane–Luang Prabang road. A number of U.S. Army personnel were brought into Laos to help coordinate the operation.[32] Thai artillerymen were brought in to support the offensive. By this time Thai pilots were also operating in Laos in Laotian-marked T-28 aircraft.[33] An August 17 cable from CINCPAC to the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that "Progress in Laos [is] due almost entirely to T-28 operations and Thai artillery" (Gravel ed., III:543).

Despite the success of Operation Triangle and the deepening U.S. military involvement in the Kingdom,[34] it is evident that by the summer of 1964, Laos was for U.S. policymakers little more than a sideshow to the conflict in Vietnam. In August, Unger cabled Washington,

> resolution Laos problem depends fundamentally on resolution Vietnam and therefore our policy here (leaving aside corridor question) is necessarily an interim one of holding the line but trying avoid escalation of military contest (Gravel ed., III:542).

Laos was subordinated to U.S. interests in Vietnam to such an extent that U.S. officials opposed moves toward a resumption of an international conference to bring peace to Laos, because a ceasefire in Laos would have hindered U.S. actions related to the conflict in Vietnam. In a cable from Saigon Ambassador Taylor revealed the U.S. attitude:

> Intensified pressures for Geneva-type conference cited in Reftel would appear to U.S. to be coming almost entirely from those who are opposed to U.S. policy objectives in SEA (except possible UK which seems prepared jump on bandwagon). Under circumstances, we see very little hope that results of such conference would be advantageous to U.S. (Gravel ed., III:523).

In a memorandum dated August 11, William Bundy stated the U.S. position even more bluntly,

> 1. We would wish to slow down any progress toward a conference and to hold Souvanna to the firmest possible position. . . .
> 2. If, despite our best efforts, Souvanna on his own, or in response to third-country pressures, started to move rapidly toward a conference, we would have a very difficult problem (Gravel ed., III:528–529).

The American opposition to the peace moves on Laos reflected not any desire for open war in that country but rather a wish to maintain the status quo, to prevent losses and to keep options open. A memorandum by Defense Department official John McNaughton on October 13 noted two aims for U.S. policy in Laos: "a) To preserve Souvanna's position (no coup). b) To prevent significant PL land grabs" (Gravel ed., III:581).[35]

And, as Bundy noted in August, "We particularly need to keep our hands free for at least limited measures against the Laos infiltration areas" (Gravel ed., III:526).

A "very difficult problem" for the United States was avoided, however, and the status quo maintained, when preliminary talks between Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong fell through. The Laotian rightists refused to agree to a plan for the return of the Plaine des Jarres to centrist control,[36] and the talks ended.

After the breakup of the preliminary peace talks in September, the forgotten war in Laos continued with increasing intensity. In October President Johnson gave his authorization for Unger to "urge the RLG to begin air attacks against Viet Cong infiltration routes and facilities in Laos Panhandle by RLAF T-28 aircraft as soon as possible" (Gravel ed., III:576–577). By that time South Vietnamese T-28 aircraft were also "bombing the Laotian corridor" (Gravel ed., II:344; III:160). These early strikes against the fledgling Ho Chi Minh trail were of militarilly questionable significance both because of the limited effectiveness of the RVNAF and the RLAF[37] and because of the fledgling character of the trail itself. In December 1963, Ambassador Unger had reported that "the recent use of the Laotian corridor was not extensive enough to have influenced significantly the then intensive VC efforts in South Vietnam" (Gravel ed., III:160). A November 1964 summary of MACV and CIA cables on infiltration concluded that on the "basis of the presently available information, it considers 19,000 infiltrators from 1959 to the present as a firm (confirmed) minimum" and 34,000 as a maximum number during the same time period. The summary concluded further that "the significance of the infiltration to the insurgency cannot be defined with precision" (Gravel ed., III:673–674).

Although the early strikes on the trail area of southeastern Laos may not have been terribly important strategically they did afford a psychological boost to the regime in Saigon.[38]

While Ambassador Unger was authorized in October "to inform Lao that YANKEE TEAM suppressive fire strikes against certain difficult targets in Panhandle . . . are part of the over-all concept and are to be anticipated later . . ." (Gravel ed., III:577), no strikes by U.S. aircraft were carried out in southern Laos until after the November elections in the United States. The U.S. air strikes both in Laos and in the DRV were reportedly contingent on reform in the Saigon government. In December 1964, Ambassador Taylor, just back from Washington, presented the Saigon government with a statement that if the GVN would demonstrate a "far greater national unity against the Communist enemy at this critical time than exists at present," then the U.S. would add its air power "as needed to restrict the use of Laotian territory as a route of infiltration into South Vietnam." After the new unity and effectiveness of the GVN became visible, promised Taylor, "the USG would begin bombing North Vietnam" (Gravel ed., II:344).

Also in early December, the JCS developed an air strike program to complement the YANKEE TEAM reconnaissance missions in northern and central Laos. Their proposals were presented to a meeting of the National Security Council on December 12. The JCS plans were approved with only one amendment. The use of napalm by U.S. planes in Laos was excluded. In an unusual act of deference the NSC decided that for the first use of napalm in Laos, "the RLAF would be the only appropriate user." It was also agreed at the December 12 meeting that there would be no public statements about armed reconnaissance operations in Laos "unless a plane were lost." If a plane were to be downed, the

U.S. government would "continue to insist that we were merely escorting reconnaissance flights as requested by the Laotian government" (Gravel ed., III:253–254). The bombing program in northern Laos code-named BARREL ROLL got under way on December 14. The program of twice weekly missions by four aircraft each was carried on into January when after the loss of two U.S. planes over Laos "the whole lid blew on the entire YANKEE TEAM operation in Laos since May of 1964" (Gravel ed., III:264). The bombing in Laos was soon overshadowed, however, by Operation ROLLING THUNDER, the bombing of North Vietnam, which began in February 1965.

The man in charge of the U.S. air war in Laos was William Healy Sullivan, the new U.S. Ambassador. Sullivan assumed his post as U.S. envoy to Laos in November 1964, but was by no means a newcomer to Laotian affairs. Despite the objections of more senior Foreign Service Officers, Sullivan had been handpicked by Averell Harriman in 1961 to serve as second in command of the U.S. delegation to the second Geneva Conference.[39] In March 1962, Harriman sent Sullivan to the Plaine des Jarres to confer with Souvanna and Souphanovong in an attempt to break the stalemate on the coalition talks.[40] Evidently Sullivan had won the confidence of Souvanna in those early contacts because after meeting with the Prime Minister on December 10, only two weeks after assuming his new post, Sullivan cabled Washington that Souvanna "Fully supports the U.S. pressures program and is prepared to cooperate in full" (Gravel ed., III:253). Since the establishment of a U.S. military mission in Laos was proscribed by the Geneva Agreements of 1962, Sullivan as Ambassador was nominally in charge of all U.S. military actions in Laos.[41] As a result, the new Ambassador came to be called "General Sullivan" or the "Field Marshal." [42] By all reports, Sullivan kept a tight rein on U.S. military activities in Laos. According to William Bundy, "There wasn't a bag of rice dropped in Laos that he didn't know about." [43] He was influential in preventing the U.S. combat role in South Vietnam from spilling over into Laos and,[44] unlike his successor, evidently tried hard, if not always successfully, to monitor and control U.S. bombing in Laos.[45] During his tenure as Ambassador, Sullivan, a graduate of Brown University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and a former Navy officer, was respected and well-liked by virtually everyone in the U.S. mission to Laos. Yet, despite his personal qualities and evident role in limiting the conflict in Laos, Sullivan was a no-nonsense pragmatist when it came to the U.S. role in Indochina. A memorandum written by Sullivan in May 1964, before he became the U.S. Ambassador to Laos, reveals this aspect of the man. At that time Sullivan was head of an interagency committee on Vietnam. In the memorandum he observed, "The Vietnamese Government is not operating efficiently enough to reverse the adverse trend in the war with the Viet Cong." To remedy the problem Sullivan proposed that Americans assume de facto control of the governmental machinery of the Republic of Vietnam.

> American personnel, who have hitherto served only as advisors, should be inntegrated into the Vietnamese chain of command, both military and civil. They should become direct operational components of the Vietnamese Governmental structure. For cosmetic purposes American personnel would not assume titles which would show command functions but would rather be listed as "assistants" to the Vietnamese principals at the various levels of government. . . .
>
> Americans should be integrated to *all* levels of Vietnamese Government . . . (Gravel ed., II:319; Sullivan's italics).

In Laos, Sullivan instituted no similar plans calling for Americans to become "direct operational components" of the Laotian government. Rather he relied on the USAID mission which operated for the most part quite independently of the RLG. With the exception of a few key departments (for example the Public Safety Advisory group and a handful of advisers to the Finance Minister who worked daily with their counterparts in the RLG) the USAID advisers in Vientiane usually remained ensconced in their air-conditioned offices in the USAID compound. The aid mission remained separated from the RLG to such an extent that it came to be called the "parallel government" and the USAID director was referred to as the "second Prime Minister." [46] "General" Sullivan remained in command, however, and the focus of U.S. involvement in Laos remained in the realm of the military.

In early January 1965, after a trip to Southeast Asia, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Harold K. Johnson, recommended that Operation BARREL ROLL be reoriented "to allow air strikes on infiltration routes in the Lao Panhandle to be conducted as a separate program from those directed against the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese units" in northern Laos. His recommendation was subsequently implemented. The code name for the program of U.S. airstrikes against the infiltration routes in southern Laos was STEEL TIGER (Gravel ed., III:338, 341).

Thus, as one observer has pointed out, the "secret war [in Laos] was really four wars. . . ." [47] Two of the "wars" were fought by American war planes, STEEL TIGER in southern Laos, and BARREL ROLL in northern Laos. A third and less secret "war" was conducted by the Laotian *Forces Armee Royale* (FAR). This has been, no doubt, the least efficient aspect of the conflict at least from the American point of view. The five regional military commanders of the FAR have often been likened to warlords and seemed always to be more intent on making money than on making war against the Communists.[48] The fourth war was that conducted by the irregular forces known variously as the Secret Army, the CIA Army, the Special Guerrilla Units (SGUs) or the *Bataillons Guerriers* (BGs). These irregular forces were an outgrowth of the CIA directed Meo Army of the early 1960s. By the late 1960s the war had taken such a heavy toll of the Meo that the irregular forces then contained soldiers from other Lao ethnic groups as well as Thai "volunteers." The SGUs were, however, still controlled largely by the CIA. Although nominally under the command of Royal Lao Army General Vang Pao, the irregular forces were beyond the control of the RLG to such an extent that once when Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma asked for irregular units to defend the Royal Capital of Luang Prabang, his request was reportedly refused.[49]

The Pentagon Papers reveal very little about U.S. involvement in Laos after 1964. All of the post-1964 references to Laos come only in a context of how events in Laos relate directly to the war in Vietnam. The single item of recurring mention is the problem of North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies through the Laotian Panhandle into South Vietnam. The resolution of this problem had been the object of the initiation of the STEEL TIGER operation in early 1965. In September 1966, General Westmoreland confronted with a Communist buildup in northern SVN, put forward a new plan for action against the infiltration. His idea which he termed "SLAM" (for seek, locate, annihilate and monitor) called for both B-52 and tactical air strikes along the trail through Laos (Gravel ed., IV:337).[50] During the summer of 1966, a Defense Department–sponsored thing-tank group was formed to study the Vietnam war and particularly the infiltration problem. The group, formed under the auspices of the JASON division of the Institute for Defense Analyses, concluded that the bombing of North Vietnam "does not limit the present logistic flow into SVN . . ." (Gravel ed., IV:354). As an alternative the JASON group proposed an anti-infiltration barrier across Laos. The group's findings clearly influenced Secretary of Defense McNamara who in October proposed limiting the bombing of the North and suggested the building of a barrier "across the trails of Laos" (Gravel ed., IV:356). His proposals were opposed both by the JCS, who disagreed on the assessment of the effectiveness of the bombing, and by Sullivan, who feared undermining Souvanna.

After the temporary coup of 1964, the U.S. had continued to support Souvanna's government. As a result of this continuing American favor, the Prince remained in office despite a coup attempt by army officers in 1965. The firm U.S. backing of the Prince was crucial in preventing further coup attempts, although such were often rumored. In October 1966, the Royal Lao government requested additional U.S. assistance and the U.S. mission decided that what the RLG needed was American Forward Air Controllers (FACs).[51] Also in October 1966 came the curious incident of Royal Lao Air Force General Ma. General Ma was the commander of the RLAF and was highly rated by American Air Attachés. As a result of the RLAF bombing over the Ho Chi Minh trail, General Ma had achieved increased status within the RLG military hierarchy. He soon came into conflict, however, with Laotian army generals. Ma objected to the generals' use of RLAF planes for personal errands—reportedly including the smuggling of opium. General Ma's conflict with the army generals reached such proportions that, despite the intervention of Ambassador Sullivan, Ma led a bombing raid on the army headquarters in Vientiane.[52] The raid failed to put out of commission any of Ma's antagonists and the general was forced to flee into exile in Thailand.

The United States was little concerned with such internecine struggles, except insofar as they might inhibit U.S. operations in Laos aimed at interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail.[53] In April 1967, General Westmoreland's attentions again turned to Laos and a new plan for operations into the Laotian Panhandle. The operation, code-named HIGH PORT, called for the invasion of southern Laos by an elite South Vietnamese division. Westmoreland envisioned "the eventual development of Laos as a major battlefield, a development which would take some of the military pressure off the south" (Gravel ed., IV:443). Civilian officials again held sway, however, with their arguments against such a move, on the grounds that it would probably be ineffective and it might lead to Souvanna's downfall and the escalation of the war in Laos (Gravel ed., IV:444).[54]

Despite the decisions not to intervene openly in Laos, the covert intervention was continued unabated. In 1966, the United States initiated Project 404. Under this program more than 100 U.S. military personnel were brought in from Thailand to advise the Laotian army and air force.[55] Also in 1966, several navigational stations were established in Laos to guide U.S. planes bombing the DRV.[56] Since these stations were clearly in violation of the Geneva Accords, which prohibited the use of "Laotian territory for military purposes or for the purposes of interference in the internal affairs of other countries," their existence was a closely guarded secret. The Communist forces in Laos, however, knew of these navigational sites. One site at Muong Phalane in central Laos, was overrun on December 25, 1967, killing two Americans. Another site at Phou Pha Thi, in northern Laos, only seventeen miles from the North Vietnamese border, was overrun by Communist forces in March 1968. Twelve U.S. Air Force men were killed at Phou Pha Thi, while a thirteenth escaped.[57]

Three weeks after the loss of the navigational outpost on Phou Pha Thi, on March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced a partial bombing halt over North Vietnam. The day before the announcement the State Department sent out a cable to the U.S. Ambassadors in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea and Laos. The cable revealed that

> In view of weather limitations, bombing north of the 20th parallel will in any event be limited at least for the next four weeks or so—which we tentatively envisage as a maximum testing period in any event. Hence, we are *not giving up anything really serious* in this time frame. Moreover, *air power now used north of the 20th can probably be used in Laos* (where no policy change is planned) and in SVN (Gravel ed., IV:595; italics added).

The next day, President Johnson announced the partial bombing halt as "the first step to de-escalate the conflict." He added, "We are reducing—substantially reducing—the present level of hostilities" (Gravel ed., IV:597).

VII. POST–PENTAGON PAPERS

> We made a big thing in the Johnson administration about stopping the North Vietnam air strikes. But at the same time we were increasing in secret the air strikes against Laos. In fact, as the general just said, which I knew, orders were that if you do not need the planes against Vietnam, use said planes against Laos.
>
> —Senator Stuart Symington
> (Symington Hearings, p. 713)

Johnson's claim of a "substantial reduction" in the level of hostilities was completely disingenuous. The planes which were no longer bombing north of the twentieth parallel were diverted to Laos. The same pattern of deception was repeated in November 1968, after the complete bombing halt over North Vietnam. On the night of October 31, in announcing the total bombing halt over North Vietnam, President Johnson proclaimed, "The overriding consideration that governs us at this hour is the chance and the opportunity that we might have to save human lives on both sides of the conflict." [1]

If such was the "overriding" concern of Johnson, clearly it did not extend to Laos. The Cornell University Air War Study Group noted,

> Following the bombing halt over North Vietnam in November 1968, the U.S. increased its air activity against Laos dramatically, taking advantage of the sudden increase in planes available.[2]

As one U.S. official put it, "We just couldn't let the planes rust." [3] With the vastly increased sortie rate in Laos and the departure of Sullivan as Ambassador in March 1969, the controls on U.S. air attacks designed to avoid the bombing of civilian targets were substantially relaxed.[4] In April 1969 the town of Xieng Khouang on the Plaine des Jarres was completely leveled.[5] Shortly thereafter, the Communists launched a drive westward from the area of the Plaine toward the town of Muong Soui. Despite vastly increasing fighter-bomber sortie rates, Muong Soui fell to the Communists on June 27. In an attempt to recoup some of their losses the Royalist forces launched a counteroffensive. Supported by massive U.S. airpower (at rates approaching 300 sorties daily in northern Laos alone) the offensive met with very little resistance. The CIA-backed SGUs of Meo General Vang Pao quickly captured all of the Plaine. The SGU forces occupied the Plaine for nearly six months.[6] In January and February 1970, faced with an imminent attack on the Plaine by PL/NVN forces, the RLG evacuated all of the civilians from the area—totaling roughly 20,000 persons. Despite saturation-bombing by B-52s,[7] the Communist forces regained complete control of the Plaine in March 1970.

The evacuation of the refugees from the area of the Plaine provided the first opportunity for Western observers to learn of what life was like under the Pathet Lao.[8] Numerous accounts of life under the PL soon began appearing in newspapers and magazines.[9] Many of the accounts from the refugees dealt with various aspects of the regimentation of life under the PL. Yet the common denominator to *all* accounts, what the refugees almost invariably talked about, was the bombing. Perhaps the most concise account of the bombing was given by a United Nations advisor in Laos, George Chapelier. After interviewing dozens of refugees, Chapelier wrote,

> By 1968 the intensity of the bombings was such that no organized life was possible in the villages. The villages moved to the outskirts and then deeper and deeper into the forest as the bombing reached its peak in 1969 when jet planes came daily and destroyed all stationary structures. Nothing was left standing. The villagers lived in trenches and holes or in caves. They only farmed at night. All of the informants, without any exception, had his village completely destroyed. In the last phase, bombings were aimed at the systematic destruction of the materials [sic] basis of the civilian society.[10]

Even an official U.S. government survey made similar findings. The survey, conducted by the United States Information Service (USIS) in Laos and revealed publicly thanks to the efforts of U.S. Congressman Paul McCloskey, reported that

> 97% of the people [that is, of the more than 200 refugees from 96 different villages and 17 different sub-districts interviewed] said they had seen a bombing attack. About one third had seen bombing as early as 1964, and a great majority had seen attacks frequently or many times. . . . 96% of the 169 persons who responded to the question said their villages had been bombed; 75% said their homes had been damaged by bombing. . . .[11]

The testimony of the refugees revealed once again the continuing deception by U.S. officials over American involvement in Laos. These officials had maintained that U.S. aircraft operating over Laos were bound by strict Rules of Engagement specifically designed to prevent bombardment of civilian targets.[12] In Congressional hearings, the U.S. Air Attaché to Laos had even testified that "villages, even in a freedrop zone, would be restricted from bombing." [13] How then did it happen that 95 percent of 169 villagers from dozens of different villages reported that their villages had been bombed?

One U.S. Foreign Service Officer who served in the U.S. Embassy in Laos gave me the following explanation,

> The Rules of Engagement are good and probably as thorough as they could be. The trouble is though that given the sociology of the Air Force, they cannot be enforced effectively. Pilots are rated not on how many civilians they avoid bombing. They're rated on bomb damage assessment, on the number of structures destroyed. They have no incentive to go out of their way to avoid bombing civilians.[14]

A less specific but perhaps more revealing explanation comes from an examination of how money is spent in Laos. The total Royal Lao government budget for fiscal year (FY) 1971 was $36.6 million. Roughly half of this amount came from RLG revenues and half from foreign aid. In contrast, U.S. economic aid to Laos in FY 1971 totaled $52 million. In the same year U.S. military assistance to Laos was valued at $162.2 million, and the FY 1971 CIA budget at roughly $70 million. The estimated annual cost of U.S. bombing over Laos in 1971 was $1.4 billion.[15] In other words, the United States spent in FY 1971 roughly twenty-eight times more to bomb Laos than on economic aid to the country.

The cost of the bombing can be compared also with the estimated $66 per capita income of Laos' citizens. Using 2.5 million persons as an estimate of Laos' population, we find that the per capita cost of U.S. bombing in Laos is $560 or more than eight times Laos' estimated per capita income. When queried as to how the United States can spend such a vast amount on destruction in Laos, how the United States can spend so much more on destruction than on construction, a State Department official replied, "our air operations [in Laos] are directed primarily at interdicting the flow of weapons and other military supplies down the Ho Chi Minh trail which would be used against our forces in South Vietnam." [16] The same official also insisted that "The rules [Rules of Engagement for U.S. aircraft over Laos] do not permit attacks on nonmilitary targets and place out of bounds all inhabited villages." [17]

Yet as the U.S. Senate Refugee Subcommittee put it in 1970, "the sheer volume and constancy of bombing activity [in Laos] since 1968 makes effective control of these strikes almost impossible." [18] Senator Edward Kennedy, Chairman of the Refugee Subcommittee, in fact, estimated that the "bombing in Laos contributed to at least 75 percent of the refugees" in that country.[19]

On March 6, 1970, in response to "intense public speculation" over U.S. involvement in Laos, President Nixon gave an address on U.S. policy and activities in Laos.[20] For the first time Nixon admitted that the United States was flying "combat support missions for Laotian forces when requested to do so by the Royal Laotian Government." Yet despite this one refreshingly candid admission, Nixon continued to perpetuate most of the deception over U.S. involvement. For example, Nixon stated, "No American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations." On March 9 the Los Angeles *Times* revealed, however, the story of how an American army adviser to the Royal Laotian Army, Captain Joseph Bush, had been killed in northern Laos on February 10, 1969.[21] The White House belatedly admitted the captain's death, but maintained that Bush had died not in combat, but as a result of "hostile action." [22] This sort of deceptive semantic distinction provided the rationale for Nixon's omission of the fact that in reality hundreds of Americans had died in the war in Laos.[23] The President had carefully limited his assertion to Americans "stationed in Laos and who were killed in "ground combat." The phrases were crucial to Nixon's assertion because many American servicemen in Laos are technically not stationed there. They are in Laos only on "temporary duty." [24] Also, the majority of Americans involved in the war in Laos never set foot on Lao soil. They fight the war from airplanes flying out of Thailand or South Vietnam or from aircraft carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Nixon also asserted that "The level of our air operations has been increased only as the number of North Vietnamese in Laos and the level of their aggression has increased." Yet, as already noted, U.S. air operations in Laos were increased dramatically in 1968 simply because aircraft were available after the bombing halts over North Vietnam. In attempting to justify the increased American involvement in Laos, Nixon also asserted that the North Vietnamese troop level in Laos had increased to "over 67,000." The contention was more than slightly questionable because Nixon's figure was more than 17,000 greater than that given out at the very same time by U.S. officials in Vientiane.[25] Additionally, Nixon was clearly guilty of misrepresentation by omission. His "precise description of our current activities in Laos" failed to mention the extensive CIA operations in Laos, the recent use of B-52s in northern Laos, or the full extent of American military advisory operations to the Lao army and air force.

In light of such deception at the very highest level of government, it is hardly surprising that the pattern was continued at the lower echelons. A particularly blatant example came to light in April 1971. In that month, the U.S. Embassy published a small book entitled *Facts on Foreign Aid*. In a section of the book headed "Causes and Motives in Refugee Movements" the Embassy stated,

> The motives that prompt a people to choose between two kinds of rule are not always clear, but three conditions of life under the Pathet Lao appear to have prompted the choice of evacuation: the rice tax, portage, and the draft. The people grew more rice than they had ever grown before, but they had less for themselves. They paid it out in the form of taxes—rice to help the state, trading rice, and rice from the heart. The Pathet Lao devised an elaborate labor system of convoys and work crews. They drafted all the young men for the army. The refugees from the Plain of Jars say that primarily for these reasons they chose to leave their homes.[26]

Contrast this with the USIS report on refugees from the Plain of Jars, which in a section titled "Reasons for moving to the RLG Zone" related that,

> 49% of the 226 [refugees] who were asked the question said that fear of bombing was the reason they had sought refuge by moving away from home; 20% gave dislike of the Pathet Lao as the reason for leaving their home areas.[27]

The USIS report concluded that "The bombing is clearly the most compelling reason for moving." [28]

The USIS survey was conducted in June and July of 1970. *Facts on Foreign Aid* was published more than eight months later, in April 1971. It is difficult to imagine that the authors of *Facts on Foreign Aid* were unaware of the findings of the USIS report. How then can the gross distortion of the only empirical data available be accounted for? How is it that the Embassy document did not even *mention* bombing as an ancillary cause of refugee movement? Again, what comes to one's mind is a form of Orwellian "doublethink" and "newspeak." Policy says that the United States does not bomb civilians. Policy is true. Therefore refugees could not have moved on account of the bombing. Because they were not bombed. Because policy says they were not bombed. . . .

And so the pattern of secrecy and deception concerning U.S. involvement in Laos evidenced in the Pentagon Papers continues. Perhaps the only difference is that as the war in Laos continues in time and in escalation, the sea of destruction enveloping the lives and homes of more Laotians sweeps wider and wider.

VIII. CONCLUSION

United States policy toward Laos can be viewed as having three phases. During the first phase, from 1950 until approximately 1960, U.S. policy in Laos was dominated by a concern for the prevention of a Communist takeover. While after the Geneva Agreements of 1954, the United States paid lip-service to the concept of Laotian neutrality, covert U.S. involvement was aimed at bringing to power the most conservative anti-Communist elements of Laotian society. After the Agreements and despite growing U.S. involvement, Prince Souvanna Phouma achieved real success in his efforts to establish a coalition government. As a result, the Pathet Lao participated in the 1958 supplementary elections as a legal political party. After the Pathet Lao successes in those elections, conservative elements in Laos led by Phoumi Nosavan and Phoui Sananikone, and backed by the United States, coalesced to oust the Pathet Lao from the government.

The second phase, from 1960 through 1962, was a transitional period during which U.S. policy shifted from opposition to Souvanna Phouma toward an at least nominal support of the Prince's neutral Government of National Union. The United States supported Souvanna not so much out of any real U.S. commitment to a truly neutral Laos, but because he was the only leader of sufficient stature to maintain a relatively stable government supported at least nominally by both Communist and non-Communist nations.

The third phase of U.S. diplomacy in Laos, from roughly 1963 to the present, has been dominated by considerations for American interests in Vietnam. While continuing to support Souvanna, the United States has incessantly carried on covert military operations against the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese in Laos. While focused primarily on the interdiction of the Communist supply lines through southern Laos into South Vietnam, this policy has also entailed a continuing buildup of CIA-directed irregular forces, first in northern Laos and gradually spreading throughout the country. Additionally, this phase has also seen the devastatingly heavy U.S. bombing attacks in northern Laos, most notably in 1968 and 1969.

Yet while these three phases are valid and useful in understanding U.S. diplomacy toward Laos, there remain certain elements of American involvement which are disconcertingly common to all three phases; namely the covert and deceptive nature of U.S. involvement and the recurring subversion of Laotian interests in favor of those of which American policymakers arrogantly thought best. In 1958, the United States attempted to influence the Laotian elections via Operation Booster Shot. After those elections the U.S. actions of shutting off aid to Laos and covertly supporting rightist forces led to the downfall of Souvanna's neutralist government. Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson flatly denied any U.S. involvement in the Prince's downfall. In 1960, the United States again played a crucial role in the overthrow of Souvanna's neutral government which was ostensibly supported by the United States. The United States claimed that the responsibility for the "fratricidal war" of that year rested "solely on the Soviet Government and its partners." In 1964 the United States opposed a peace conference on Laos because such a conference would have limited

America's "free hand" in its interdiction of the Communist infiltration routes through southern Laos. After 1966, the United States secretly used bases in Laos to direct U.S. aircraft bombing the DRV. In 1968 and 1969 American bombing over Laos was dramatically escalated simply because U.S. warplanes were available for use after the bombing halts over North Vietnam. Even at the height of U.S. bombing over northern Laos in the summer of 1969, the United States acknowledged conducting nothing more than "armed reconnaissance." The United States continues to claim, despite substantial evidence to the contrary, that strict Rules of Engagement for U.S. aircraft operating over Laos prevent the bombing of civilian targets. In short, the pattern of covert U.S. involvement in Laos and deceptive public statements regarding that involvement continues right up to the present day.

The U.S. government has often cited Communist activities in Laos and particularly North Vietnamese intervention as the *raison d'être* for U.S. actions in Laos. In this essay I have touched only occasionally on North Vietnamese actions in Laos. I have done so primarily because this paper has focused on U.S. involvement in Laos. Nevertheless, only the most myopic of observers could fail to recognize that the DRV, like the United States, has used Laotian territory in pursuance of its own ends.[1] Most notably this has been so in southern Laos, where the DRV has even subordinated the interests of its allies in Laos, the Pathet Lao, to its own ends. While some observers may argue that North Vietnamese intervention in Laos is legitimized by reason of historical circumstance or by reason of geographic propinquity,[2] we shall approach this issue from the opposite direction. That is, can U.S. actions in Laos be justified in terms of reaction to North Vietnamese intervention in Laos?

U.S. involvement in Laos can, of course, be judged in either of two ways; firstly in terms of the standards by which one hopes the world's most powerful democracy might be (and indeed usually claims to be) governed or secondly, as suggested above, relative to the actions of those to whom the United States is opposed. By the first standard, the conduct of the U.S. government or more precisely the conduct of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government in Laos is clearly a travesty. Twice the U.S. government has subverted legally constituted governments of Laos. Repeatedly it has violated both the letter and the spirit of international agreements on Laos. More recently the U.S. Executive has rained down literally billions of dollars' worth of bombs on a country with whom the United States is not at war and without Congressional or international sanctions or even public knowledge of its actions.

Yet, international conflict and diplomacy are realms which seldom conform to any absolute standards of right and wrong. Therefore, we might better examine U.S. involvement in Laos according to the second standard; namely in comparison to the actions of North Vietnam. First, it is relevant to point out that the DRV, like the United States, has incessantly violated Article 4 of the 1962 Geneva Agreements, which proscribes the introduction into Laos of foreign military and paramilitary personnel. Also, the DRV has probably matched, or even surpassed the U.S. record of deception concerning its involvement in Laos. However, in terms of sheer destruction of Laotian lives and homes and countryside, the U.S. involvement in Laos has been far more disastrous than anything the DRV has done. According to the Cornell Air War Study, from 1965 through 1971 the United States dropped more than *1.6 million tons* of bombs over Laos.[3] In a country of 91,000 square miles this amounts to more than seventeen tons for every square mile of the Kingdom. On a per capita basis this amounts to roughly six-tenths of a ton of bombs for every man, woman and child in the country. The bombing has not, of course, been spread evenly across the whole country. It has been concentrated on the panhandle region of southern Laos and the Pathet Lao–controlled areas of northern Laos. The bombing has resulted in the destruction of all urban centers under Pathet Lao control and, in at least some areas, the destruction of virtually every village.[4] Such vast destruction wrought so casually on one of the least-developed countries of the world surely cannot be justified on the basis of any comparable destruction wrought by Communist action in Laos.[5]

Much of the deception and the casually arrogant nature of the U.S. intervention in Laos has been documented in detail in the Pentagon Papers. Yet after reading through the myriad details of those documents, after reading the memos and cables of U.S. policymakers speaking of "scenario development" and "gradual, orchestrated acceleration of tempo . . . of the reprisal strikes," and of John McNaughton's view of U.S. aims in South Vietnam, to which U.S. policy in Laos was subordinated, that is,

> 70%—To avoid a humiliating U.S. defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor)
> 20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.
> 10%—To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.
> ALSO—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used,

and after reading the Assistant Secretary of Defense's opinion on the essential aspect of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia,

> It is essential—however badly SEA may go over the next 2–4 years—that the U.S. emerge as a "good doctor." We must have kept promises, been tough, taken risks, gotten bloodied, and hurt the enemy very badly,[6]

after reading these things, one is left with a single overwhelming impression: that to U.S. policymakers, the *people* of Laos, the *people* of Indochina never mattered. Even Robert McNamara's often-quoted memorandum on the bombing of North Vietnam, relating that

> The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1000 non-combatants a week while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one (Gravel ed., IV:172)[7]

comes not in the context of whether such bombing is morally defensible or out of any evident concern for those civilians who were killed and injured. Rather it comes in the context of concern for the "world image of the United States."

Reading these things my mind goes back to some of the people I met in Laos. I recall the refugee named Xieng Som Di, who returned to his village one day in the summer of 1967. He returned from working in his rice fields only to find that his village had been bombed. His house and all his possessions were destroyed, and his mother, father, wife and all three of his children had died in the bombing raid. And I remember the refugee woman named Sao La who told me of how her two sons, aged four and eight, were killed in two separate bombing attacks by jets. She related that in both incidents the boys had been playing near the rice field. When the jets came over, they had not run for shelter fast enough. They were killed by antipersonnel bombs, or what Sao La called "bombi." And too, there were victims who were not injured by any weapons. One refugee woman, Sao Siphan, related to me how her children died. After the CIA-backed irregular forces captured the Plaine des Jarres in the summer of 1969, all of the civilians of the area were gathered into refugee camps. Sao Siphan and her family were moved into a camp at a place called Nalouang. There, within a period of two months, all of Sao Siphan's children, ranging in age from one to sixteen years, died in an epidemic which swept the refugee camp. She told me, "All of my children, all seven, died." [8]

And the victims are not just the civilians, for even the soldiers fighting in Laos are in many ways themselves victims. One soldier with whom I talked in the spring of 1971 illustrates this fact. His name was Bounthong. He was twenty-five and had been a soldier for seven years. His father had been killed in fighting with the Communists in 1970. In early 1971 his mother was badly wounded during the Communist shelling of Long Cheng, the headquarters of the CIA irregular forces. Bounthong came to Vientiane with his younger brothers and sisters to bring his wounded mother to the hospital. He wanted to sell me his army jacket in order to buy medicine which doctors told him was needed to help his mother. He got the medicine but his mother died anyway. A few days later, with newspaper stuffed into his shoes, whose bottoms had worn through, and leaving his younger brothers and sisters in a Buddhist temple because he had no relatives in Vientiane, Bounthong flew back to Long Cheng to resume his soldiering.

Perhaps these people and their relatives cannot matter in the formulation of United States policy, or in the fighting of a war, yet still one cannot help but wonder. If U.S. policymakers had not been so concerned with being tough and hurting the enemy very badly, if the United States had not opposed the peace initiatives in 1964 in order to preserve America's "free hand" in Laos, one cannot help but ask whether these people would have suffered so tragically.

One wonders whether U.S. policymakers are pleased with the results of our involvement in Laos. Clearly we have "been tough" in Laos and have "gotten bloodied."

But the blood is not our own.[9]

NOTES

I.

1. U.S. Senate, *Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad Hearings,* October 20, 21, 22 and 28, 1969 (hereafter referred to as the *Symington Hearings*), p. 543.
2. *Symington Hearings,* p. 673.
3. Charles Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy toward Laos Since 1954* (Boston: Beacon, 1972), p. 240. Significantly this quotation provides the title for Stevenson's book.

II.

1. Neil Sheehan *et al., The Pentagon Papers* (New York Times/Bantam, 1971), p. 9.
2. Arthur Dommen, *Conflict in Laos* (New York: Praeger, 1964, 1971), p. 26. All citations of this book refer to the second edition unless stated otherwise.
3. Prince Souphanouvong was officially ousted from his positions in the Lao Issara

government in exile in 1949 before its official dissolution. Souphanouvong now leads the Pathet Lao in opposition to U.S. presence in Laos.

4. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
6. U.S. House, Committee on Government Operations, *U.S. Aid Operations in Laos:* Seventh Report by the Committee, House Rept. 546, 86th Cong., 1st session, 1959, p. 7 (hereafter referred to as the *Porter Hardy Report*).
7. For a more complete account of the major provisions of the 1954 Geneva Accords, see Gravel ed., I:270–282.

III.

1. Roger M. Smith in epilogue in Bernard Fall, *Anatomy of a Crisis: The Laotian Crisis of 1960–1961* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), p. 237.
2. Hugh Toye, *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 107. Also, for further speculation on the cause of Souvanna Phouma's fall see Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
3. Accounts differ as to Katay's attitude toward coalition with the Pathet Lao. For instance, Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 83 relates that he "spoke hopefully of prevailing upon Souphanouvong's nationalism and bringing the Pathet Lao back into the national community." Other accounts, however, give evidence of his anti–Pathet Lao attitude. For example, Katay authored a tract entitled *Laos—Ideal Cornerstone in the Anti-Communist Struggle in Southeast Asia* (Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 31. See also Toye, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108).
4. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
5. There is some discrepancy in the usage of the term Vientiane Agreements. Toye, for instance, uses the term narrowly only to refer to agreements signed in November 1956. Marek Thee (in Nina Adams and Alfred McCoy, *Laos: War and Revolution,* New York: Harper and Row, 1970, pp. 131–138), however, uses it to refer to all ten agreements signed from August 1956 to November 1957. We shall use the term in the latter sense.
6. *United States–Vietnam Relations 1945–1967.* Study prepared by the Department of Defense (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971, 12 vols.), 10:1092. Hereafter this study will be referred to as simply USG ed.
7. U.S. House, Committee on Government Operations, *United States Aid Operations in Laos, Hearings,* before a subcommittee of the committee on Government Operations, 86th Cong., 1st sess., 1959. p. 180 (hereafter these hearings will be called the *Porter Hardy Hearings,* after the subcommittee chairman).
8. *Porter Hardy Hearings,* pp. 184–185. Next to Robertson even John Foster Dulles appeared somewhat soft on the Communist threat to Laos. In a news conference on May 11, 1954, following the fall of Dien Bien Phu, he remarked that Laos and Cambodia were "important but by no means essential" because they were poor countries with meager populations. The lapse was only momentary, however, for the remarks were subsequently deleted from the official transcript. Gravel ed., I:56.

   As Stevenson (*op. cit.*, p. 20) points out, "American policy toward Laos between 1954 and 1959 was much more a product of Robertson's vigorous anti-communism than of any of the traits or attitudes of Eisenhower."
9. USG ed., 10:737. Also for further details on Franco-American estrangement in Laos during this period see Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 44, 63.
10. *Porter Hardy Hearings,* pp. 709–710. See also Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 102, on how Brown's successor "vanished into thin air" into Laos as PEO chief.
11. U.S. House Appropriations Committee, *Hearings, Mutual Security Appropriations for 1959,* p. 354, quoted in Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
12. *Porter Hardy Report,* p. 7.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
14. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

15. These and other accounts of corruption among USOM officials in Laos are cited in the *Porter Hardy Report,* pp. 2–4. See also *Porter Hardy Hearings.*

16. *Porter Hardy Report,* p. 5.

17. Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) Report on Southeast Asia, 28 May 1958, in USG ed., 10:1142.

18. *Porter Hardy Report,* p. 45.

19. *Ibid.,* p. 46.

20. *Porter Hardy Hearings,* p. 223.

21. *Ibid.,* p. 224.

22. *Ibid.,* p. 225.

23. *Porter Hardy Report,* p. 46.

24. *Porter Hardy Hearings,* p. 193.

25. Dommen, *op. cit.,* p. 109; Toye, *op. cit.,* p. 114.

26. OCB Report on Southeast Asia, 28 May 1958 in USG ed., 10:1143.

27. Sisouk Na Champassak, *Storm Over Laos* (New York: Praeger, 1961), p. 64.

28. Toye, *op. cit.,* p. 114.

29. See Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 64.

30. Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation* (New York: Dell, 1964), pp. 111–112. Opinion is almost unanimous that the aid cutoff in June 1968 was done merely on the *pretext* of the need for monetary reform; the real target was Souvanna Phouma's coalition government. See Dommen, *op. cit.,* p. 110; Toye, *op. cit.,* p. 118; Hilsman, *op. cit.,* p. 118. The only exception to this view, except of course for U.S. government officials such as Robertson, is, curiously enough, Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 59, whose book is most recent. He argues that pressures in the United States had been building up for some time against abuses in the aid program to Laos, and that "the evidence is strong that American aid would have been suspended no matter who was Premier." Evidence from the Pentagon Papers suggests that the earlier interpretations were correct. In the OCB Report, 28 May 1958, the ominous sentence "We are now considering various possibilities relating to a reappraisal of our effort in Laos," comes at the end of a section discussing the election results. The report's discussion of monetary reform comes afterward and includes the statement that "scandalous import licensing was stopped when negotiations led to acceptance by the Lao Government of new procedures proposed by the U.S. There have been no abuses since" (USG ed., 10:1143). At any rate, the United States could not have been unaware that the aid cutoff for whatever reasons, coming less than two months after the May elections, would put great pressure on Souvanna's government.

31. Wilfred Burchett, *The Furtive War: The United States in Vietnam and Laos* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 172.

32. U.S. source quoted in Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 65.

33. *Porter Hardy Hearings,* p. 191–192.

34. *Ibid.,* p. 195–196.

IV.

1. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 66.

2. Hilsman, *op. cit.,* p. 118. Stevenson suggests that Sananikone's inclusion of the CDNI members was done "under pressure from the Crown Prince as well as some Americans" *op. cit.,* p. 66.

3. Hilsman, *op. cit.,* p. 120; Dommen, *op. cit.,* p. 118.

4. Dommen, *op. cit.,* p. 115, indicates that the DRV was at fault in the incident but Toye, *op. cit.,* p. 121, counters that the clash was precipitated, perhaps deliberately, by a Laotian army patrol. Toye also suggests that Phoui, in maneuvering for emergency powers, may have been emulating Marshal Sarit of Thailand.

5. Toye, *op. cit.,* pp. 123–124.

6. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 70.

7. Toye, *op. cit.,* p. 125. Also see Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy* (New York: Schrocken Books, 1972, originally published in 1964) pp. 331–332.

8. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

9. USG ed., 10:1239.

10. See Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 120, for a description of these attacks.

11. USG ed., 10:1244.

12. As two RAND analysts put it, "In retrospect it is apparent that the Sananikone government precipitated the final crisis that led to war in Laos"; in A. M. Halpern and H. B. Fredman, *Communist Strategy in Laos* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., June 14, 1960).

13. B. B. Fall, *Anatomy of a Crisis* (New York: Doubleday, 1969) pp. 130–131. See also William J. Lederer, *A Nation of Sheep* (New York: Norton, 1961) for an account of this time period in Laos and what Lederer calls the "Big Deception from Laos."

14. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81 suggests that the reserved U.S. reaction to the "crisis" in Laos might have been due to the new Secretary of State, Christian Herter, who was much less interested in Asia than his predecessor, John Foster Dulles.

15. USG ed., 10:1246.

16. Fall, *op. cit.*, pp. 154–155; Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

17. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 85. As Stevenson points out, the CIA's sponsorship of Phoumi was opposed by the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane.

19. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

20. Hilsman, *op. cit.*, p. 65–66. For a description of the split between the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane and the CIA mission there, see Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–86.

21. USG ed., 10:1250.

22. Jim Lucas of Scripps-Howard newspapers quoted in Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

23. Dommen, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 133. He reports that "CIA agents participated in the election rigging. . . ."

24. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 138, suggests that the escape of the Pathet Lao leaders was actually a blessing in disguise for the rightists. They had previously announced that they would try the PL leaders for "offenses against the security of the state." It had become apparent, however, that a trial of Souphanouvong and his comrades would have been "exceedingly embarrassing to the Vientiane government." Thus the escape of the PL leaders obviated the potentially embarrassing trial.

25. NSC memorandum 6012, 25 July 1960. USG ed., 10:1293.

V.

1. David Wise and Thomas Ross, *The Invisible Government* (London: Mayflower, 1964, 1968), p. 149.

2. Bernard B. Fall, *Anatomy of a Crisis: The Laotian Crisis of 1960–1961* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 185. Fall gives a fascinating account of Kong-le's earlier career that Kong-le received instructions from his French and American military advisers on the tactical problem of occupying and holding a major city only the day before the coup! See also Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

3. Joel M. Halpern, *Government, Politics and Social Structure in Laos: A Study in Tradition and Innovation* (Los Angeles: UCLA, Dept. of Anthropology, 1961), p. 40.

4. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

5. Ibid., pp. 105–106.

6. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

7. See Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 110, for a full description of the delegation's demands. Souvanna later described Parsons as "the most reprehensible and nefarious of men," who was the "ignominious architect of [the] disastrous American policy toward Laos." The Prince continued, "What I shall never forgive the United States for, however, is the fact that it betrayed me and my government." Souvanna Phouma's remarks come from an oft-quoted interview in the *New York Times*, January 20, 1961.

8. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 328. Schlesinger says the decision on the removal

of the Prince was reached in "late October." Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 114, says the decision was not reached until November 10.

9. Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

10. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 196. Curiously enough, Fall had related in an earlier book, *Street Without Joy* (1964), p. 337, that about 1,000 civilians were killed in the "Battle of Vientiane." It is not explained why this earlier figure, supposedly based on an "on-the-spot investigation" by Fall himself, is reduced so drastically in the 1969 book.

11. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

12. Dommen, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–179.

13. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 120. See also Toye, *op. cit.*, pp. 163–165; Fall, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, pp. 123, 126–127, 132, 148–156, 170 and *Street Without Joy*, pp. 334–337; and USG ed., 10:1238–1239. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 185, alone among all the observers seems to accept the charges of Vietnamese troop intervention.

14. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, p. 338, estimates that the available Phoumist forces outnumbered the Kong-le/ Pathet Lao troops roughly 4 to 1.

15. Writing in 1964, Bernard Fall gave a succinct answer to questions such as those posed by Eisenhower. He wrote ". . . it had been forgotten that the main ingredient in revolutionary war is *revolution*. And 'our' Laotians simply had nothing to be revolutionary about" (*Street Without Joy, op. cit.*, p. 342).

16. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

17. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

18. Hilsman, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

20. Theodore Sorenson, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 644.

21. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

22. USG ed., 11:62–63.

23. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 338; Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

24. Hilsman, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

25. Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–287. An additional factor in this respect was that a massive U.S. intervention in far-off Laos would present tremendously difficult logistic problems in contrast to the relatively very short supply lines of the Communists. See Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

26. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

27. Fall, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, pp. 212–213.

28. See note 3. As pointed out by Fall and Stevenson, the absence of North Vietnamese troops did not mean that there was no North Vietnamese involvement at all. The DRV had been supplying both advisers and material to the Pathet Lao, but not regular troops. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 163, does suggest, however, that in addition to advisers, the DRV aided the Pathet Lao with mortar detachments.

29. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

30. These plans were approved April 29 not May 11 as Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 153, has written. On the latter date NSAM 52 announced the President's decisions (Gravel ed., II:641).

31. USG ed., 11:155.

32. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

33. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 177–178; Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 162; Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 207–208; Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

34. USG ed., 11:247–248.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 247–248. Both Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 179, and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 344, indicate that the Meo guerrilla force levels were raised to 18,000 in the summer of 1961. In light of the Pentagon Papers their figure appears to be exaggerated. Also, Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–161, suggests that the covert actions of that summer may have come without Kennedy's full knowledge. Again, the Pentagon Papers make it clear; this was not the case.

36. USG ed., 11:328. The aerial resupply missions referred to here are those by Soviet aircraft which were flown into that town after the PL/Kong-le territorial gains prior to Geneva.

37. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 167; Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

38. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 179. See also Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 167, who quotes an observer as saying, "There was considerable evidence that the Pathet Lao were not abiding by the ceasefire. . . ."

39. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 180. Dommen, *op. cit.*, pp. 216–219, gives an account of Nam Tha strikingly different from any other observers. He depicts it throughout as carried out on the Communist side almost entirely by the North Vietnamese and suggests that for the Pathet Lao it was only "excellent field training." The only evidence he cites to substantiate North Vietnamese dominance in the operation is the diary of a North Vietnamese soldier purportedly picked up by Phoumi's troops. The accounts of Toye and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–174, suggest little if any North Vietnamese participation. The account of Hilsman, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–141, usually refers to "Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces," though he does mention an attack by "four Vietnamese battalions."

40. Harriman's suspicions appear to have been correct. See Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

41. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

42. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 174. Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

43. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

44. *Ibid.*, As Stevenson points out the account may have been apocryphal but could well have been true.

45. Toye, *op. cit.*, pp. 183–184.

46. For the text of the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, and the Protocol to that Declaration, see *Symington Hearings*, pp. 413–418.

VI.

1. Quoted in Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

2. *Symington Hearings*, p. 521.

3. D. Gareth Porter, "After Geneva: Subverting Laotian Neutrality," in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, lays the blame entirely on the United States and the Laotian rightists. Dommen, *op. cit.*, pp. 223–260, tends to lay the blame much more with North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao. A more balanced account is given by Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–199. As he puts it (p. 183), "Blame for breaking the Geneva Accords cannot be placed on only one group. There was no one point in time when the agreed provisions were in effect, and after which there were violations."

4. Hilsman, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

6. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

7. Porter in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 186. See also *Symington Hearings*, p. 473.

8. Hilsman, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

9. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 240. The DRV, like the United States, had tried to conceal its involvement in Laos. As a result, the number of North Vietnamese remaining in Laos after the withdrawal deadline is a point of controversy and vague speculation. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 183, recounts that the DRV withdrew "only about half of their forces in Laos." Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 240, cites the State Department's estimate that " 'several thousand' Vietnamese troops had left Laos by the deadline, but this left several other thousands still within the country."

11. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

12. *Symington Hearings*, p. 473. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

13. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 195.

15. Dommen, *op. cit.*, pp. 258–259.

16. See *Aggression from the North. The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam* (Department of State Publication 7839, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965). This document indicates that in the early 1960s most of the personnel infiltrating through Laos into South Vietnam were native Southerners who had gone north after the 1954 Geneva Agreements. In 1964, however, an increasingly larger proportion of the infiltrators were native northerners. *Message*

No. 35 of 16 September 1965 from the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference shows also that DRV supported the Pathet Lao in northern Laos in 1964 with both supplies and DRV troops. The *Message* also indicates that the DRV tried to hide its involvement in Laos by dressing NVA troops in Laos in Pathet Lao–style uniforms.

17. Porter in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

18. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 196–197. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 267. Porter in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

20. Dommen, *op. cit.* (1964 edition), p. 258.

21. Porter in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

22. Department of State Bulletin, 50:910, June 8, 1964, quoted in Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

23. Neo Lao Hak Sat, *Twelve Years of American Intervention and Aggression in Laos* (Neo Lao Haksat Publications, 1966), p. 48.

24. See also *Gravel* ed., III:145, wherein it is reported that on "11 June 1964 Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma reaffirms original agreement (8 June) to U.S. armed escort of reconnaissance flights over 'South Laos' and the Plaine des Jarres, with authority to attack ground units first firing on them." This information seems to belie Souvanna Phouma's denunciation of the subsequent U.S. air strikes. Evidently Souvanna had agreed only to armed reconnaissance and not to retaliatory strikes. This interpretation is indicated by Ambassador Unger's evasive testimony in the Symington Hearings (p. 667), ". . . I know that we discussed with Souvanna Phouma both the kinds of flights that he was interested in and we also talked about the things that were contemplated. . . . Since Souvanna Phouma himself had asked to have certain kinds of flights made, of course, he was not as—he had obviously opened the door to that extent. . . ." See also Porter in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

25. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

26. Washington *Post,* June 14, 1964. The editorial also cited the case of American pilots flying air strikes in the Congo. Again, these operations were first revealed by the New China News Agency.

27. As the Cornell Air War study group pointed out, "the technical significance of 'armed reconnaissance'—an attack sortie flown in search of targets of opportunity—is not widely understood. Hence, the terminology has some potential for deception." Raphael Littauer and Norman Uphoff, eds., *The Air War in Indochina* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 77.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

29. *Symington Hearings,* p. 399.

30. Secretary of Defense McNamara after a trip to Saigon in early 1964, had recommended " 'hot pursuit' and small-scale operations across the Laotian border by GVN ground forces." The recommendation, along with others by McNamara, was approved by President Johnson in a National Security Council meeting on March 17, along with a directive "for all agencies 'to proceed energetically' in executing them." Gravel ed., III:157. There is some evidence that GVN soldiers were operating in Laos much prior to 1964. For example, in the prisoner exchange called for in the 1962 Geneva Agreements, the Pathet Lao released three Vietnamese soldiers whom they claimed to have captured near Tchepone after infiltrating from South Vietnam (Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 235). See also Porter in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 203, and Neo Lao Hak Sat, *op. cit.*, p. 65, for the "deposition" of one of the captured South Vietnamese. In contrast, the RLG reported capturing six North Vietnamese soldiers prior to the Agreements of 1962 (Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 226).

31. The same memo notes Thai involvement in a covert intelligence gathering operation code-named Hardnose in southern Laos.

32. *Symington Hearings,* p. 479.

33. Dommen, *op. cit.*, p. 275. The memorandum cited on p. 269 reveals that "Hanoi claims to have shot down a T-28 over DRV on August 18 and to have captured the

Thai pilot flying the plane. Although the information the North Vietnamese have used in connection with this case appears to be accurate, it is not clear the pilot is alive and can be presented to the ICC. The possibility cannot be excluded, however, nor that other Thai pilots might be captured by the PL." Gravel ed., III:609. See also Gravel ed., III:552–553 for cable evidently to the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane, in which Rusk grants "discretionary authority to use AA (Air America) pilots in T-28s for SAR [search and rescue] operations when you consider this *indispensable* rpt. indispensable to success of operation. . . ."

34. It was during the summer of 1964 that U.S. pilots over Laos were allowed "to fire on targets on the ground even if they were not fired upon." *Symington Hearings,* p. 476.

35. It was in this memorandum that McNaughton gave his view on the essential aspect of U.S. policy in SEA. "It is essential—however badly SEA may go over the next 2–4 years—that U.S. emerge as a 'good doctor.' We must have kept promises, been tough, taken risks, gotten bloodied, and hurt the enemy very badly" (Gravel ed., III:582).

36. Dommen, *op. cit.,* p. 278.

37. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 207.

38. *Ibid.,* p. 208.

39. *Ibid.,* p. 157.

40. *Symington Hearings,* p. 421.

41. *Symington Hearings,* pp. 486, 517–518. See also p. 485 for a description of "Ambassador Sullivan's Air Force."

42. T. D. Allman, "Less Holy Than Godley," in *Far Eastern Economic Review,* December 11, 1971.

43. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 209.

44. *Ibid.,* p. 209. *Symington Hearings,* p. 490.

45. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* pp. 209, 225. See also Fred Branfman, "Laos Bombing Limits Ended," in the Boston *Globe,* December 7, 1970.

46. See Fred Branfman, "Presidential War in Laos, 1964–1970," in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.,* pp. 257–264, for a description of the parallel government. Perhaps something about the priorities of the U.S. effort in Laos is reflected in these informal subtitles. The U.S. Ambassador was called "the General" or "the Field Marshal" whereas his *subordinate,* the USAID director, was called "the second Prime Minister." For another description on the "parallel government" see Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 220. The extent of the "parallel government" was indicated by a USAID worker when he testified that the aid program in Laos" is probably the only mission that we have that is—that more or less sits on a bag of cement until it gets into a school", (*Symington Hearings,* p. 581).

47. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 210.

48. U.S. Senate Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, *Laos: April 1971,* a Staff Report (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 14. This report will hereinafter be called simply the *Moose-Lowenstein Report.* See also Fred Branfman in Adams and McCoy, op. cit., p. 223–225.

49. *Moose-Lowenstein Report,* pp. 14–15.

50. Exactly how Westmoreland planned to monitor anything *after* annihilating it is not clear. But, of course, "SLMA" wouldn't have made near so nice an acronym. Whether Westmoreland's plan was implemented or not is not clear from the Pentagon study. Evidently it was not.

51. *Symington Hearings,* p. 439.

52. Dommen, *op. cit.,* pp. 289–290. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 219. See David Feingold, "Opium and Politics in Laos," in Adams and McCoy for a brief account of the involvement of General Ouane Rattikone (General Ma's chief antagonist) in the opium trade.

53. See Dommen, *op. cit.,* pp. 279–281, 303–304, for a description of the development of the trail.

54. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 217, quotes one U.S. official as saying, "the biggest job Bill Sullivan had was to keep Westmoreland's paws off Laos."

55. *Symington Hearings,* pp. 409–410, 457–458.

56. *Ibid.,* p. 465.

57. *Ibid.,* pp. 425, 465, 470, 489–490. See also Dommen, *op. cit.,* pp. 297–298, for an account of how the navigational station on Phou Pha Thi was captured. Another account (Washington *Post,* March 16, 1970) reported that Phou Pha Thi also served as a base camp for "American-led teams of Meo mercenaries entering North Vietnam on special harassment operations." A memorandum by Secretary of Defense McNamara dated May 19, 1967, tells also of plans for American led South Vietnamese Special Forces teams to operate in eastern Laos. Gravel ed., IV:172.

VII.

1. *New York Times,* November 1, 1968.

2. Littauer and Uphoff, *op. cit.,* p. 78.

3. T. D. Allman, "Waiting for A Miracle," in *Far Eastern Economic Review,* March 12, 1970.

4. See *Symington Hearings, op. cit.,* p. 784, wherein the deputy commander of the U.S. 7/13th Air Force, Udorn, Thailand, testified that in the summer of 1969 "certain restrictions were removed and we were allowed to use airpower [in Laos] in a little freer manner."

5. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 224.

6. A number of observers have reported that the SGUs' treatment of the civilians of the Plaine was, by Laotian standards, exceptionally brutal. For example, see Jack Foise, " 'Scorched Earth' Reported in Laos. U.S. Aids Plan," in the Washington *Post,* March 2, 1970; and Fred Branfman, in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.,* p. 249.

7. Littauer and Uphoff, *op. cit.,* pp. 79–80.

8. A few reports by Western observers (such as those by Jacques Decornoy in *Le Monde,* July 3–8, 1968 and reprinted in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*) of life under the PL and American bombing of the PL zone had been made previous to this time, but had received very little attention in the United States.

9. For example, Daniel Southerland, "What U.S. Bombing Feels Like to Laotians," *Christian Science Monitor,* March 14, 1970; Ian Wright, "The Laotians—Caught in the Cross Fire," *Manchester Guardian,* March 14, 1970; Laurence Stern, "Laotian Refugees Want a Sanctuary," *Washington Post,* March 26, 1970; Hugh D. S. Greenway, "The Pendulum of War Swings Wider in Laos," *Life,* April 3, 1970.

10. Georges Chapelier and Josyane Van Malderghem, "Plain of Jars, Social Changes Under Five Years of Pathet Lao Administration," *Asia Quarterly,* I, 1971, p. 75.

11. The full text of the USIS report is printed in U.S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, *War-Related Civilian Problems in Indochina, Part II, Laos and Cambodia.* Hearings, April 21 and 22, 1971. Hereafter, this document is referred to as the *Refugee Hearings, April 1971.*

12. For a discussion of the Rules of Engagement see the *Moose-Lowenstein Report,* pp. 9–12, and Stevenson, *op. cit.,* pp. 214–215. Stevenson reports that the most severe punishment given to pilots for violation of the Rules of Engagement was "transfer out of Laos."

13. *Symington Hearings,* p. 514.

14. Personal conversation with the author, September 1971, Washington, D.C. See also note 4 in the next section.

15. Most of these figures came from the *Moose-Lowenstein Report,* p. 3. The cost of CIA expenditures is estimated from the figures given in this report. The cost of U.S. bombing over Laos has never been officially revealed. The figure cited herein is one used by *Time* magazine, August 16, 1971. A slightly lower figure is given by Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 2. He cites figures totaling $1.14 billion as the 1971 cost of the bombing over Laos. A larger figure of roughly $2 billion can be calculated from the sortie cost figure given in the Pentagon Papers ($20 million/1,000 sorties, Sheehan *et al., op. cit.,* p. 545) and the total sorties over Laos in 1970 as given by the Cornell Air War Study Group (101,000, Littauer and Uphoff, *op. cit.,* p. 275).

16. Letter from David Abshire, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, to Senator Robert Griffin, October 1, 1971.

17. Letter from Abshire to Senator Griffin, dated November 23, 1970.

18. U.S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, *Refugee and Civilian War Casualty Problems in Indochina,* A Staff Report, September 28, 1970 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 30.

19. *Refugee Hearings, April 1971,* p. 61. The total number of civilians displaced in Laos over the last decade is estimated at 700,000, or roughly one quarter of Laos' total population. *Ibid.,* p. 47. Many of these people were, of course, displaced previous to the heavy U.S. bombing in Laos.

20. For the full text of Nixon's statement see the *New York Times,* March 7, 1970, or Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*

21. Los Angeles *Times,* March 9, 1970, *New York Times* of the same date.

22. The White House distinction is especially curious in light of the fact that U.S. military personnel stationed in Laos including even the Marine guards at the Embassy in Vientiane receive combat pay allowances.

23. Although exact figures on Americans killed in Laos have not been released, bits and pieces of information are available from a variety of sources. Stevenson, *op. cit.,* p. 3, estimates that "From 1964 through 1970, over 400 Americans died in the fighting in Laos and another 230 men were listed as missing." The *Moose-Lowenstein Report,* p. 12, relates that between January 1970 and April 1971, 81 aircraft and 66 U.S. Air Force personnel were lost over Laos. Not included in these figures, the loss of eight American Forward Air Controllers over Laos in the same time period. For other accounts of American deaths in the Laotian conflict see the Washington *Post,* March 16, 1970, and the *Symington Hearings,* p. 470, 489.

24. *Symington Hearings,* pp. 457, 465.

25. Hugh D. S. Greenway, "The Pendulum of War Swings Wider in Laos," in *Life* magazine, April 3, 1970, and Fred Branfman, in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.,* p. 269.

26. U.S. Embassy Laos, *Facts on Foreign Aid* (Vientiane: Embassy of the United States, USAID, Mission to Laos, April 1971), p. 105.

27. *Refugee Hearings, April 1971,* p. 15.

28. *Ibid.,* p. 17. While the USIS report deals only with the refugees from the Plain of Jars there is substantial evidence that the bombing has been the primary causative factor in the creation of refugees in many other parts of the country. For example, Langer and Zasloff, *op. cit.,* p. 104, speak of tribal people from eastern Laos who have "been forced out by the pressures of war—primarily the intensified bombing." See also the *Moose-Lowenstein Report,* p. 20, and *Refugee Hearings, April 21 and 22, 1971,* pp. 37, 89–113. Another article, about refugees in southern Laos cites the bombing as only an ancillary cause of refugee movement. The article (Tammy Arbuckle, "Ground Combat—Laotian Refugees Cite Life Under the Reds," in the Washington *Evening Star,* January 17, 1971) reports "Ground combat, higher living costs and poorer living conditions under the communists provide the greatest incentives to leave their homes, refugees in southern Laos say."

VIII.

1. One prime example of this myopia is D. Gareth Porter's "Subverting Laotian Neutrality" in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.* While cataloging the machinations of the United States and its "military clients" in Laos after the 1962 Geneva Agreements, Porter omits any discussion of the issue of North Vietnamese violations of the Agreements. He does not say whether he believes there were no DRV violations or whether he feels that DRV intervention was somehow warranted. Rather, he ignores the whole issue completely. A reverse myopia is exhibited by Langer and Zasloff, *op. cit.,* who focus on North Vietnamese intervention and completely ignore that of the United States. Langer and Zasloff do, however, document DRV intervention and deception over its role in Laos. See Langer and Zasloff, *op. cit.,* pp. 164–180.

2. See, for example, Noam Chomsky, *At War with Asia* (New York: Vintage Books of Random House, 1970), pp. 213–234, who argues that DRV involvement in Laos has come largely after and in response to U.S. intervention in Laos. The evidence now available from the Pentagon Papers certainly does nothing to detract from such a thesis. It is also relevant to point out that official U.S. government sources recently acknowledged that "about 80 percent of all North Vietnamese [in Laos] are in southern Laos . . ." (*Moose-Lowenstein Report,* p. 6). These forces are presumably engaged chiefly in activities connected with the Ho Chi Minh trail. Thus it would be impossible to judge this aspect of North Vietnamese involvement in Laos without also judging the whole history of the Vietnam conflict and U.S. intervention in it.

3. The Cornell Air War Study Group estimates that during this time period, the United States dropped 1,150,000 tons of bombs on the trail area of southern Laos and 494,000 tons on northern Laos, Littaur and Uphoff, *op. cit.,* p. 287. For a description of what the bombing has done to the once verdant Plain of Jars see T. D. Allman, "Landscape Without Figures" in the *Manchester Guardian* (weekly), January 1, 1972. Allman writes, "All vegetation has been destroyed and the craters, literally, are countless."

4. In addition to the reports of Chapelier, Decornoy, USIS, and others already cited, an Associated Press dispatch in October 1970 relates how villages in northern Laos were bombed:

> Vientiane (AP)
> Reliable sources confirmed yesterday a report that U.S. pilots flying bombing missions over northern Laos frequently save a final bomb or rocket for hitting unauthorized civilian targets. . . .
>
> The sources said unauthorized bombing by individual pilots has largely destroyed the Pathet Lao capital of Sam Neua and many other Laotian towns, although population centers are technically off limits for U.S. fliers.
>
> Competition among pilots often begins with the pilots trying to see who can come the closest to a town without actually hitting it and quickly degenerates into wiping out the town, the sources said (Bangkok *World,* October 7, 1970).

A recent column by Jack Anderson (Washington *Post,* February 19, 1972) gives further evidence of the incredibly grotesque nature of U.S. bombing over northern Laos. Anderson quotes a former U.S. Air Force sergeant:

> In one case there was a guy in the Plain of Jars area who was crawling away after they'd hit a village with 500 pounders. So they dropped a 250 pounder on him. That blew off one leg.
>
> He was still moving so two planes went in and dropped anti-personnel bombs and they got that one guy crawling away.

The same ex–Air Force man also recounted the bombing of a Pathet Lao hospital.

5. Indeed the Laotian Communists seem to have exercised more restraint than have their comrades elsewhere in Indochina. For example, they have never subjected Vientiane to any rocket attacks similar to those launched against Phnom Penh and Saigon. The Pathet Lao have, however, occasionally launched a few rockets against the airfields in Luang Prabang and Pakse. And regardless of what the Pathet Lao have done in Laos, their actions, whatever they could conceivably have done, could not possibly justify the unilateral U.S. intervention in Laos.

6. The foregoing quotations come respectively from *Gravel* ed., III:166, 316, 695, 526.

7. In justice to McNamara, one should point out that next to some of his colleagues, the Secretary of Defense, at least after his "disenchantment," comes across as a moderate. For example in March 1965 Maxwell Taylor cabled Washington, " 'Current feverish diplomatic activity particularly by French and British' was interfering with the ability of the United States to 'progressively turn the screws on D.R.V.' " (Sheehan *et al., op. cit.,* p. 394). Even as late as May 1967 Walt Rostow could write, "We have held that the degree of military and civilian cost felt in the North and the diversion of resources to deal with our bombing could contribute marginally—and perhaps significantly—to the timing of a decision to end the war" (*ibid.,* p. 574). By the time Rostow wrote this memo, the term "civilian cost" was no longer a vague supposition.

A CIA study in January 1967 had reported that the bombing casualties in North Vietnam were "about 80 percent civilians" (*Ibid.*, p. 523).

8. The preceding case histories are documented in "A Survey of Civilian War Casualties Among Refugees from the Plain of Jars," printed in U.S. Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, *World Refugee and Humanitarian Problems, Hearings,* July 22, 1971 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971).

9. There are a number of indications that at least some U.S. officials are pleased with the U.S. involvement in Laos. For example see the Washington *Post,* January 11, 1972, for a letter to the editor from Thomas F. McCoy, a former CIA agent in Laos. McCoy asserts that the job done by the CIA in Laos "based on any comparison with the U.S. military effort in Vietnam would have to be: *A spectacular success.*" Even Senator Jacob Javits declared the conflict in Laos "one war that is a success" (*Symington Hearings,* p. 792). And Senator Symington expressed a similar opinion: "Why do we publish our military failures . . . in Vietnam, but do not tell the people about our successes in Laos?" (*ibid.*, p. 790). Implicit in these declarations of success is, of course, a racist assumption that a war is more "successful" if Asian blood is shed instead of American. For a discussion of the U.S. experience of "success" in Laos as a "model for future American counter-insurgency operations in the third world," see Branfman in Adams and McCoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 273–278.

15. Beyond the Pentagon Papers: The Pathology of Power

by Fredric Branfman

I. THE AGE OF SPEER

> Speer is, in a sense, more important for Germany today than Hitler, Himmler, Goering, Goebbels, or the generals. They all have, in a way, become the mere auxiliaries of the man who directs the giant power machine—charged with drawing from it the maximum effort under maximum strain . . . in him is the very epitome of the "managerial revolution." Speer is not one of the flamboyant and picturesque Nazis. Whether he has any other than conventional political opinions is unknown. He might have joined any other political party which gave him a job and a career. He is very much the successful average man, well-dressed, civil, non-corrupt, very middle class in his style of life, with a wife and six children. Much less than any of the other German leaders does he stand for anything particularly German or particularly Nazi. He rather symbolizes a type which is becoming increasingly important in all belligerent countries; the pure technician, the classless, bright young man, without background, with no other original aim than to make his way in the world, and no other means than his technical and managerial ability. It is the lack of psychological and spiritual ballast and the ease with which he handles the terrifying technical and organizational machinery of our age which makes this slight type go extremely far nowadays. . . .
>
> This is their age; the Hitlers and Himmlers we may get rid of, but the Speers, whatever happens to this particular special man, will long be with us.
>
> —London *Observer,* April 9, 1944.

My generation—I was nineteen when the first GI was killed in Vietnam in 1961—does not share the same sense of "betrayal" that so many of Dan Ellsberg's peers have expressed on reading the Pentagon Papers.

Passing our teens in the apolitical fifties, we never really believed in John Kennedy till after he died, nor in his brother till just before he was killed. And a generation immersed in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* responded to Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon more as symbols of evil than as men. Whether we called it the System, Capitalism, Racism, Amerika, or were too turned off to try, we felt instinctively that such men were but expressions of a deeper malaise. We felt betrayed by the very *existence* of a Johnson or Nixon, not because as President they failed our trust in them.

For many of us, then, the real importance of the Pentagon Papers does not

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lie in the machinations of the McNamaras, McNaughtons, Rostows, Bundys, and Johnsons. It is, rather, in the men who wrote the Papers themselves.

These men, after all, were the real key to American activities in Indochina. The President and his advisers may have made the rules. But it was the Papers' authors, filling top posts in the CIA, Pentagon, State Department, and Department of Defense, who played the game out. A President and his advisers said "win." The Papers' authors designed the Phoenix programs, strategic hamlets, search and destroy missions, B-52 bombing raids, in an attempt to do so. Johnson and Kennedy were safely back in the White House. These younger men between thirty and forty-five, the cream of their generation, were out in "the field" directing military operations, fingering Vietnamese for assassination or torture, spying or being fired at themselves, making studies aimed at breaking guerrilla morale and dismantling an ancient culture.

And so, perusing the Pentagon Papers, one finds oneself pondering the minds of those writing it as they gritted their teeth and ground on through twenty years of trickery and deceit. What is it like to realize that your leaders were simply using you as vehicles for their own vanity and careers? That a cause to which you devoted the best years of your life was a fraud? That an effort for which you risked your very life was only mounted through manipulation and deceit of the people back home for whom you were supposedly fighting? That you have participated in the murder of an officially estimated 2 million Asians and Americans as a result of an aggressive war waged not by the enemy but by your own leaders?

Some of the Papers' authors, of course, have clearly reacted with a shock and concern which extends beyond themselves. Few who know Ellsberg and Russo, for example, doubt their concern for both the suffering of the Indochinese abroad and the assault on democracy at home. But what of the others? Were it not for Ellsberg and Russo, after all, the Papers would never have even been made public. More importantly, few of the other authors have followed their lead by similar revelations, in-depth critiques, public protest, or even public support for Ellsberg and Russo. Is it mere indifference? Cowardice? Or is it, perhaps, something a bit more profound? A feeling of power manqué, perchance? Do their real objections to policy—as voiced so obliquely but frequently in the Pentagon Papers—stem from the belief that *they* could have done it better? Do these men, for all their frustrations over the misuse of power in this particular war, still secretly hanker for some of their own? Are they still holding on within the Pentagon, CIA, law firms, corporations, think tanks, universities, hoping for their day at the helm?

Well, we certainly won't all agree on the answers. But, having been asked to write this chapter on the post–Pentagon Papers phase of the Indochina war, I find it necessary to begin with such questions. For any description of what occurred after March 1968 must begin with the following concluding passage from the Papers—surely one of the most remarkable and incomprehensible in the political history of this nation:

> The speech [Johnson's announcement of the partial bombing halt] had an electric effect on the U.S. and the whole world . . . it was unmistakably clear throughout all this time that a major corner in the war and in American policy had been turned and that there was no going back. . . . The President's speech at the end of March was, of course, not the end of the bombing much less the war, and a further history of the role of the limited strikes could and should be undertaken. But the decision to cut back the bombing,

> *the decision that turned American policy toward a peaceful settlement of the war* [emphasis added] is a logical and fitting place to terminate this particular inquiry about the policy process that surrounded the air war. Henceforth, the decisions about the bombing would be made primarily in the Pacific by the field commanders. . . . A very significant chapter in the history of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war had come to a close . . . partial suspension [of the bombing] in part did produce what most had least expected—a breakthrough in the deadlock over negotiations. And that in the longer view of history may turn out to be its most significant contribution (Gravel edition, IV:275–276).

One is prepared to find John Q. Public, lied to and manipulated by his leaders at every turn, ready to believe the incredible assertion that the March 31 bombing halt over North Vietnam was "the decision that turned American policy toward a peaceful settlement to the war." But the authors of the Pentagon Papers?

These men, after all, had just completed months of reading tens of thousands of pages of official documents and public records of an Indochina war already more than two decades long. They had learned in intimate detail how no American administration had ever shown the slightest willingness to allow the Indochinese to settle their own affairs, that even Roosevelt, opposing French colonialism at a time when the Viet-Minh was aiding the United States, had never done more than propose the vague idea of a trusteeship. The writers had before them official documentation—top-secret to boot—that not once for twenty years had American leaders ever even considered the idea of withdrawal; that all of those memos, cables, reports, papers, notes, dealt solely with the *means* of keeping the United States in Indochina.

There was that final State Department cable, which the *New York Times* later entitled, "Cable to Envoys in Asia on Day of Johnson's De-Escalation Speech." It made it as explicit as necessary that March 1968 marked no change in U.S. goals in Indochina: ". . . air power now used north of 20th can probably be used in Laos (where no policy change planned) and in SVN."

Surely they must have realized that the bombing halts of March and November 1968 had nothing to do with turning toward "peaceful settlement." That, in fact, by continuing secret bombing in Laos while decreasing the highly publicized air war in North Vietnam, American policymakers would find themselves free to wage more war than ever. That far from bringing "limited strikes," March 31 was to mark the beginning of the most indiscriminate bombing in the history of warfare.

The passage quoted above was written March 31, 1968. By March 31, 1972, U.S. bombers had dropped over 4,450,000 tons of bombs on Indochina, twice as much U.S. bombing as was absorbed by Europe and the entire Pacific theater during World War II (2,044,000 tons—source: Pentagon).

During these four years, official Pentagon figures say that over 600,000 combatants have been killed (31,205 Americans, 86,101 ARVN, and 475,609 "enemy," as of February 26, 1972); nearly twice that number has been wounded.

During these four years, well over 3 million civilians have been killed, wounded or made homeless, according to estimates of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Refugees.

During these four years, American leaders have: tripled the bombing of Laos, going from 50 to 100 sorties per day to 200 to 300; invaded Laos in the south with 20,000 U.S.-supported ARVN and the north with 10,000 CIA-funded

Thais; resumed the bombing of North Vietnam after the November 1968 bombing halt—hitting it on 328 separate occasions under Nixon; initiated a fullscale, no-holds-barred war in once-peaceful Cambodia; and spent billions on expanding the political control of the Thieu regime through such steps as building new Tiger cages, increasing the secret police, and mushrooming the Phoenix program of CIA assassination and abduction.

What prevented the authors of the Papers from realizing that March 1968 represented just one more change of tactics? That in the perspective of twenty years, Johnson's commitment of U.S. ground troops was a mere aberration? That whoever followed him would simply correct this error by reverting to a pattern of relying upon massive doses of U.S. materiel, advisers and technology supplied to Asians who would do the dying? That far from leading to a "peaceful settlement," the March 31 speech would be followed by far more wholesale slaughter in Laos and Cambodia than had ever occurred in North Vietnam? That in April 1972, the American Executive Branch would remain as institutionally committed to interfering in Indochina as it was in 1950 when its present leader was warming up on homegrown Red-baiting? Was it naïveté? Unquenchable optimism? A desire to please McNamara and Clifford, who both pushed for the bombing halt? An attempt to share credit for a policy which presumably many of the authors of the Papers themselves had argued for?

I don't know. I suppose it is all of these things. I think, though, that it was also something more, something which is itself the genesis of the mechanized devastation that was to follow March 1968.

The authors of these papers are, above all, technicians. Critics who claim they lack perspective may be quite right. But not because they lacked more pieces of paper from the White House, CIA or wherever.

They lack perspective because they have come no closer to hearing the screams of the Indochinese than the men they served; because though they may finally have believed the RAND studies which showed high morale and spirit among the "enemy," they have no more *feeling* for what that spirit is than do their leaders who failed to kill it.

These men are, in a word, still inside the machine. Like gauges, they can measure, quantify, identify breakdowns and trouble-spots; but they cannot step outside and set their own direction; like Ellsberg and Russo they can describe the mistakes in U.S. policy toward Vietnam; but unlike these two men, they are unwilling to do all that really matters anymore: *act* to stop it.

If there is a pathology of power expressed in American intervention in Vietnam, then, it extends far beyond the top policymakers; and, indeed, the particular fascination of the Pentagon Papers for my generation is the realization that a whole new generation of technocrats is waiting in the wings to replace the Rostows, Bundys, Kissingers and McNamaras; that these men, the authors of the Pentagon Papers, are even now helping to execute new Vietnams at home and abroad despite all that they know and all they have seen.

The time has long passed for all of us to realize that an editorial on Speer which appeared in the London *Observer* twenty-eight years ago showed remarkable prescience; that this country has produced its own class of "pure technicians, classless, bright young men without background, with no other original aim than to make their way in the world, and no other means than their technical and managerial ability"; and that the Johnsons and Nixons we may get rid of, but that the authors of the Pentagon Papers—whatever happens to these particular special men—will long be with us. That this is, indeed, their age.

It is no quirk of fate that though March 1968 may mark the end for the Pentagon Papers, it was a mere punctuation point in a new and even bloodier chapter in the sorry history of American intervention in Indochina.

II. TRANSITION: MARCH 1968 THROUGH JANUARY 1969

> In the region of the Plain of Jars there came to be a lake of blood and destruction, most pitiful for children, friends and old people. For there were airplanes and the sound of bombs throughout the sky and hills. . . . Every day and every night the planes came to drop bombs on us. We lived in holes to protect our lives. There were bombs of many kinds [and] shooting and death from the planes. . . . I saw my cousin die in the field of death. My heart was most disturbed and my voice called out loudly as I ran to the houses. Thusly I saw the life and death for the people on account of the war of many airplanes. . . . Until there were no houses at all. And the cows and buffalo were dead. Until everything was leveled and you could see only the red, red ground. I think of this time and still I am afraid.
>
> —from essays by Laotian peasants from the Plain of Jars (from *Voices from the Plain of Jars,* Branfman, ed., Harper and Row)

The aftermath of the February 1968 Tet Offensive faced American planners with a tactical dilemma.

Both the first (1946–1954) and second (1961–1968) Indochina wars had been built around large Western expeditionary ground forces, supported by even greater numbers of local conscripts and mercenaries.

Airpower had of course been used lavishly—particularly from 1965 through 1968. But its essential function, even at its peak, when 120,000 tons fell every month in 1968, was to *support* the half million–man U.S. ground army deployed in Vietnam. Most of the American funds, personnel, and blood went into the ground effort.

Tet proved, however, that this could not continue. This most highly publicized of ground wars had already excited vocal and increasingly powerful domestic opposition on moral grounds; antiwar activities were, moreover, winning increasing support from the public at large due to the high cost of the war ($33 billion in the peak year of 1968) and high American deaths (thirty-men-a-day average through 1967); many factions within the Pentagon itself were not happy with the high cost of supporting the ground army, diverting funds from more expensive and highly technological weapons systems; and, in many ways most importantly, the army itself had begun to fall apart from within—lack of leadership in the field and public disaffection with the war at home had already begun to lead to refusals to fight, fraggings of officers, heightened black-white tensions, and a skyrocketing use of drugs.

Tet proved the coup de grace to any hopes of holding on through ground intervention. It was bad enough that the war was immoral, costly, killing American boys, and supporting a bunch of corrupt Asian generals who showed their gratitude by selling heroin to our soldiers. But that the war was also unwinnable, that all this pain had been endured in a war that could never be won, finally proved too much. The guerrillas might never defeat the United States decisively on the battlefield. But they could exhaust domestic opinion back at home simply by holding on through shows of strength. As Henry Kissinger later put it in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, "the guerrilla wins as long as he does not lose."

The U.S. ground army would be withdrawn. It would be a long, slow, painful process. Over 30,000 more Americans would die after Tet; tens of thousands of new men would become addicted to heroin; internal problems would grow to such proportions that by June 1971 a Colonel Robert Heinl would write an article entitled "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," in the *Armed Forces Journal*, stating that "by every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and noncommissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near-mutinous." But the American ground troops would come out until, at this writing, there were but a few thousand still left in combat. But while withdrawing U.S. combat troops, American planners could no more rely on their Asian armies in 1969 than the French could in 1945. Poorly led, composed largely of mercenaries and unwilling conscripts, graft-ridden and dispirited, U.S.-supported Asians were simply no match for their highly motivated guerrilla adversaries.

Much of this remained hidden from the American public. The NLF was to greatly decrease its fighting in South Vietnam following 1968—presumably to allow U.S. troop withdrawals to be completed—and this allowed pro-administration observers to ballyhoo the success of "Vietnamization"; the press on its side did not report military operations by Asian troops in anything like the detail with which it had reported American fighting.

On one occasion in September 1970, for example, I was visited by a former U.S. Special Forces operative named Ed Rasen. Rasen had just spent two weeks with a massive ARVN operation up near the Laotian border as a freelance photographer. He had been the only American actually out in the field with the Asian troops. For several evenings he regaled me with stories of the failures of the operation: ARVN troops deserting, ARVN troops running away at the sight of a possible enemy soldier, ARVN commanders calling in airstrikes on their own positions. The most bizarre tale was that of one platoon which found a large enemy cache of weapons, was told to carry them to the top of a hill where they could be brought back to Saigon for a display of captured enemy weapons, refused, and finally left the weapons where they had found them.

Rasen spoke with some contempt of American journalists who never actually went out in the field with the troops to observe them, but wrote their stories based on visits to the forward base of operations where they received rosy briefings by Vietnamese officers and U.S. advisers.

Sure enough, several days later I opened up a *New York Times* "News of the Week in Review" to read an article by James Sterba describing that very ARVN operation as one of the great successes of Vietnamization until that point.

Despite such public-relations successes, however, it was as clear to U.S. military planners in 1969 as it is today that neither the ARVN, RLA (Royal Lao Army) nor FANK (Armed Forces of the Khmer Nation) could do a job that half a million U.S. foot soldiers could not do. Casual readers of the newspapers may have been surprised when "Vietnamization" proved so conspicuous a failure during the ARVN invasion of southern Laos in February 1971, the Thai/Lao attempt to hold the Plain of Jars in December 1971, the operations in Cambodia 1970–72, the collapse at Quang Tri in April 1972. To anyone living in Indochina, not to mention U.S. tacticians, such debacles were to be expected.

The Nixon administration's accession to power in January 1969 thus set into motion a changed tactical situation. Forced to withdraw U.S. ground troops and unable to rely on Asian allies, *but fully committed to remaining on in Indochina,* the administration had but one alternative: to place a new priority on the use of airpower. January 1969 saw the focus of U.S. military involvement gradually begin to shift from the ground to the air.

There was ample precedent for this change. The Johnson administration had earlier initiated a fullscale mechanized war in Laos, one which involved but several hundred U.S. foot soldiers. Beginning in May 1964, the air war had by January 1969 already seen tens of thousands of American airmen involved in delivering 410,000 tons of bombs into Laos (see *The Air War in Indochina* [Beacon Press, 1972], p. 281, the revised edition of the Cornell Air War study); thousands of villages had been destroyed; tens of thousands of civilians had been killed or wounded; and hundreds of thousands had been driven underground or into refugee camps (see "Presidential War in Laos: 1964–1970," by F. Branfman in *Laos: War and Revolution,* Adams and McCoy, eds., Harper and Row).

This war had already proved eminently successful from the point of view of our Executive branch. It was relatively cheap in dollars and American lives, and —most importantly—free from domestic criticism due to a highly successful policy of news management. As Undersecretary of State U. Alexis Johnson was later to testify to Congress, "The only U.S. forces involved in Laos are the air. We have no combat forces stationed there. And I personally feel that although the way that the operation has been run is unorthodox, unprecedented, as I said, in many ways I think it is something of which we can be proud of as Americans. It has involved virtually no American casualties. What we are getting for our money there . . . is, I think, to use the old phrase, very cost effective" (Hearings of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, July 22, 1971, p. 4289).

And this shift to the air in no way implied any change in the real focal point of American involvement: control of the cities and towns of South Vietnam. By 1969, as today, the only tangible goal of American leaders was to keep a pro-U.S. regime in power in South Vietnam at least until the next American election. Doing this meant ever-increasing repression in the urban centers. During Nixon's first two and one half years in office, for example, the State Department officially admits that the CIA-run Phoenix program murdered or abducted 35,708 Vietnamese civilians, 4,836 more than the Pentagon claimed the NLF had assassinated or kidnapped during the same period, and a monthly increase in murder of 250 percent over the 200 killed by the CIA every month under Johnson; and the greatly increased arrests of political prisoners by the Thieu regime reached a crescendo after the one-man October 1971 election. As the *New York Times* reported on April 2, 1972 "University and high school students . . . charge that their leaders have been disappearing from the streets and ending up in prison. . . . 'I cannot remember a period since Thieu came to power when so many student arrests have been made,' a university student said. . . . Tales of torture and beating proliferate. Articles in student publications report violent treatment during captivity."

But despite this continued focus on political control in Vietnam, the sum total of the Nixon administration's military tactics is a new form of warfare.

By continuing the bombing while withdrawing American ground troops, the administration has come to wage the most fully *automated* war in military history; in waging such war, it has inevitably been led into *total* war, one which cannot distinguish between military and civilian targets and winds up destroying everything in its path.

And, most importantly, the administration has come to wage the most *hidden* war in history. If domestic opinion was the main obstacle to continuing the war, then, clearly, hiding the war from the American people would become a major goal; and troop withdrawals, diminishing dollar cost, lower U.S. casualties and an unseen use of airpower afforded the means. In a sense, the Nixon administration has launched the most ambitious attempt in history to reverse Kissinger's doctrine: through secrecy, it is today the *administration* which wins if it does not lose."

This automated, total, secret war is not merely more of the same. For until Nixon, foreign interveners in Indochina had always depended on ground armies. We prefer to think of this new war under Nixon as a third Indochina war.

III. FROM THE NIXON INAUGURAL TO THE 1972 SPRING OFFENSIVE

> In the defense report which I made to Congress this year, I tried to point out that we would be continuing air and sea power and the presence of air and sea power in Asia for a good time. . . . This idea that somehow or other the Nixon Doctrine means that we will not have air or sea power in Asia is a great mistake. . . .
>
> —Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird on NBC's "Meet the Press," November 14, 1971

> Do I think that a war that has gone on for 30 years is going to end? The answer is no . . . our policy is to get U.S. troops out of the war.
>
> —Secretary Laird, Washington *Post,* April 11, 1972

The secrecy of Mr. Nixon's war-making in Indochina is most dramatically illustrated by the fact that the three events which sparked the greatest domestic debate during his first three years in office were relatively unimportant to the Indochinese. The U.S. invasion of Cambodia in May 1970, the Son Tay prison raid in November 1970, and the invasion of southern Laos in February 1971 were all most significant, to be sure. But they were all relatively short-term, conspicuous in their failure, and did little to affect the overall course of events. And, most importantly, all were of relatively little consequence compared to Mr. Nixon's most serious escalations: his expansion and increasingly sophisticated use of the United States' highly technological air power: his permanent use of the ARVN for fullscale fighting in Cambodia and Thais for the war in Laos; and his increasingly flagrant disregard for the rights of civilian populations in times of war.

The full extent of the Nixon administration's war-making in Indochina can only be appreciated by recalling the situation when Mr. Nixon first took office.

The war was primarily a contracting ground war within South Vietnam on January 20, 1969. The bombing of North Vietnam had ceased three months earlier; Cambodia was still at peace under Prince Sihanouk; and though the bombing of Laos had tripled with the bombing halt over North Vietnam, such heavy bombing had only been going on for three months at that point.

Within South Vietnam, the situation was more susceptible to a negotiated settlement than at any time since the buildup of American ground troops began in 1965. It was clearly in the NLF's interest to permit Mr. Nixon to withdraw gracefully, but completely, and it is an open secret that they offered such a solution. As a high-ranking official in Undersecretary of State John Irwin's office was later to tell me in March 1971, "the NLF offered the President a face-saving formula for withdrawal when he first took office. They told him they would not embarrass him, that they would allow him to play any charades he wished with Vietnamization, as long as he set a fixed date for total withdrawal within a reasonable amount of time. But the President said no."

Instead, the focus of the fighting was gradually shifted from South Vietnam into Laos and Cambodia. In this way the war became less visible and—coupled with U.S. ground troop withdrawals—served to give the illusion that things were "winding down."

The heavy bombing of Laos continued at a rate double that of 1968. Between January 1969 and December 1971, according to the Cornell Air War study, over 1.3 million tons of bombs were dropped on that tiny land. This was four times as much bombing as had occurred between 1948 and 1968, eight times more bombing than that absorbed by Japan during World War II.

This bombing is particularly characterized by the heavy civilian toll it has taken. As a September 1970 staff report of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Refugees has reported, "The United States has undertaken . . . a large-scale air war over Laos to destroy the physical and social infrastructure in Pathet Lao areas. . . . The bombing has taken and is taking a heavy toll among civilians" (p. 19).

Between 1969 and March 1972 the bombing is estimated to have created some 3,500,000 refugees (including those who were brought into the U.S.-controlled areas, and those who remained in Pathet Lao zones but were forced to retreat underground); I interviewed several thousand of these people during my years in Laos, and each one said that his or her village had been partially or totally destroyed by American bombing, and that he'd been forced to live underground for weeks and months on end.

Civilian killed and wounded were also high. In the summer of 1970 the U.S. Information Service conducted a survey among 30,000 refugees from the Plain of Jars in Northeastern Laos. The Plain of Jars, formerly inhabited by 50,000 people, was totally bombed out between January and September 1969. The USIS survey took a wide opinion sample among more than 200 refugees from 96 separate villages spread throughout the Plain. The report found that 95 percent of the people had had their villages bombed, 68 percent had seen someone wounded, and 61 percent had seen a person killed (reprinted on p. 15, U.S. Senate Subcommittee hearings on Laos, April 1971; see also a survey of civilian casualties from the Plain of Jars, prepared by Walter Haney, and reprinted in the July 1971 hearings of the same subcommittee).

Equally striking, civilian casualties have vastly outnumbered military killed and wounded in Laos. The same USIS survey, for example, found that 80 percent of the casualties were civilian and 20 percent Pathet Lao.

The heavy bombing of the civilian population in Laos was in part due to the fact there are no "strategic" targets—such as factories, large bridges, petroleum refineries; and those "military" targets that do exist—soldiers, trucks, truck parks, or whatever, are rarely locatable from the air. The guerrillas sleep by day, move by night, through the forest, in small groups; trucks also move at night, are camouflaged during the day; and the mobile, small units of the guerrilla forces simply do not depend on large fixed storage areas or base camps. When American pilots did go up over Laos in the hundreds, they were simply not prepared to dump their bombs at random out in the forest; they inevitably wound up striking at such signs of human life which could be found: footprints, cut grass, smoke from fires, plowed or cultivated fields. Invariably, such signs of life were in and around villages; invariably they were provided by civilians.

There are also many indications that the CIA continually pushed for bombing of villages in Laos as a matter of deliberate policy. Former targeting officers I have interviewed have stated time and again that the CIA exerted constant pressure beginning in 1967 to have villages removed from the restricted target listing. This appears primarily due to the fact that the CIA had created its own Secret Army in Laos, based originally on Meo tribesmen in northern Laos. As the tides of war began to turn against the Meo in 1966 and 1967, the CIA apparently decided that bombing the Pathet Lao "economic and social infrastructure" was necessary to save its position. Although these pressures from the CIA were resisted in the beginning, the Nixon administration eventually acceded entirely to CIA demands.

A third reason for the heavy civilian casualties under Nixon is the vastly increased use of antipersonnel weaponry. Such weapons, which cannot destroy a truck, bridge or factory, are only meant for human beings.

Although the figures are classified, all of the airmen we interviewed have noted a heavy increase in the use of *antipersonnel bombs* and *antipersonnel mines* in the late 1960s.

The antipersonnel bombs include the *pineapple*, which has 250 steel ball-bearing pellets in it which shoot out horizontally. One planeload carries 1,000 such bombs, which means that one sortie sends 250,000 steel pellets shooting out horizontally over an area the size of four football fields; the *guava* is an improvement over the pineapple in that it is smaller and its pellets shoot out diagonally; one planeload of guava bombs shoots out 300,000 to 400,000 pellets diagonally so that they will go into holes where the peasants are hiding; the *plastic* bomb, which breaks into thousands of slivers one-eighth of an inch by one-sixteenth of an inch, will not show up on an X ray; the *fragmentation* antipersonnel bombs, like the BLU/63, which breaks into dozens of jagged fragments, are larger and calculated to do far more damage than the steel ball-bearing pellets. Similarly, *flechettes* are tiny steel arrows with larger fins on one end which peel off the outer flesh as they enter the body, enlarge the wound, and shred the internal organs. They are fired from rockets and M79 grenade launchers.

Antipersonnel mines differ from the bombs in that they are not dropped with a specific target in mind. Rather, they are part of an officially designated "area denial" program. Under the Nixon administration, hundreds of square miles have been flooded with hundreds of thousands of such tiny mines as the Gravel, Dragontooth and button bomblets, in an attempt to make areas under attack uninhabitable for human life. In the November 1970 Electronic Battlefield Hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee, for example, Air Force representatives testified that the area denial program had been instituted in half of southern Laos. This is an area of some 20,000 square miles inhabited by—according to the American embassy in Vientiane—over 200,000 people. These mines are camouflaged to look like leaves and animal droppings, and include such items as the WAAPM (wide-area antipersonnel mine), which emits eight strings each eight yards in length. The individual tripping on the WAAPM cords will blow himself up.

It is common knowledge in Indochina that the percentage of U.S. ordnance delivered which is explicitly antipersonnel in nature has greatly increased in recent years. During a visit to Udorn Air Force Base in the fall of 1969, for example, the man in charge of stockpiling munitions at Udorn told me that about 80 percent of the ordnance stocked on base for use in Laos was antipersonnel in nature; he said that this was considerably higher than it had been even at the height of the war under Johnson in 1968.

It is clear that the use of such weapons has considerably increased the numbers of civilians killed and wounded by the bombings.

But although the administration's bombing has reduced most of the U.S.-embassy estimated 3,500 villages in Pathet Lao zones to rubble, erased whole societies like the Plain of Jars off the face of the earth, and driven most of the 800,000 people still living in Pathet Lao zones (by estimate of U.S. Ambassador Godley) underground,* the bombing has been as spectacular in its military ineffectiveness as in its depredations.

Although the Nixon administration spent over $4 billion bombing Laos between January 1969 and April 1972, flew over 400,000 sorties against it, and devoted from 30,000 to 50,000 American airmen to the effort at any given time, the astonishing fact is that the Pathet Lao now control far more territory than when the bombing began.

Given the inability of the air force to locate Pathet Lao guerrillas, the bombing may even have been counterproductive. My interviews with hundreds of former Pathet Lao soldiers indicate that—as in North Vietnam—the bombing strengthened military morale rather than crushing it. This was not an unimportant fact in an arena where American planners had to rely on the ground on unmotivated Asian conscripts and mercenaries and their corrupt officers.

Since January 1969, the Pathet Lao have solidified their control throughout north and northeastern Laos, moving to the outskirts of Luang Prabang in the north and forcing the evacuation of Long Cheng in the northeast; in central Laos they have moved as far west as Dong Hene, and in southern Laos they have taken control of the Bolovens Plateau. At this writing, administration control in Laos does not extend much farther than Luang Prabang itself, plus half a dozen major towns in the Mekong Valley.

The Nixon years have been characterized by mushrooming escalation on the ground in Laos, as well as in the air.

While the administration was talking withdrawal to the American public at home, it was actually transforming what had been regarded as a temporary U.S. infrastructure in Laos into a permanent one. The Quonset huts in the U.S. AID compound and the unprepossessing U.S. embassy building in Laos, once seen as a symbol of American ability to pack up and leave in twenty-four hours if necessary, were replaced by giant cement structures. Between 1969 and 1971 over $2 million was put into new American buildings for an expanding U.S. presence: a giant windowless building for USAID with a helicopter pad on the roof, a large American embassy, new apartments for American officials in the American community known as "Kilometer Six," and new U.S. AID compounds at Houei Sai, Luang Prabang, Long Cheng, Savannakhet and Pakse.

This U.S. entrenchment in Laos, and the increased numbers of Americans contracted to the CIA after 1969, have been occasioned by the Nixon administration's most far-reaching escalation in Laos: its transformation of the Secret Army from one based on Meo tribesmen into one based on Thais.

Due to endemic corruption within the regular Lao armed forces, the CIA began setting up its own army in the late 1950s, known as the *Armée Clandestine*, or Secret Army. Recruitment was begun among the Meos in northern Laos, and by July 1961 CIA Colonel Edward Lansdale reported in a memo to Ambassador Maxwell Taylor that "About 9,000 Meo tribesmen have been equipped for guerrilla operations. . . . Command control of Meo operations is exercised by the chief CIA Vientiane with the advice of Chief M.A.A.G. Laos." Although later supplemented by Burmese, lowland and highland Thais, Nationalist Chinese, black Thais and Vietnamese, the Meo people remained the core of the army until 1968. Trained, directed, and paid by Americans under contract to the CIA, this secret army did the bulk of the fighting during the periodic rainy season offensives carried out by the CIA, and did the bulk of the defending during the Pathet Lao dry season offensives.

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* Senate Armed Services Committee hearings, July 22, 1971, p. 4287.

As a result, they had already suffered devastating losses by 1968, and a decision was made to step up the import of Thais to make up these losses. Recruiting at Udorn in northeast Thailand under the aegis of the 4802nd Joint Liaison Detachment, CIA station chief Pat Landry began systematically sending in regular Thai army units, Thai special forces, and Thai youths recruited on an individual basis into Laos. During the Nixon administration's first three years in office, the number of Thais fighting in Laos grew from a few thousand to nearly 20,000.

But if Laos has represented the most prolonged and widespread of the Nixon administration's escalations, Cambodia has proved the most sudden and dramatic. As suggested above, the American invasion of Cambodia which began April 30, 1970, and lasted two months, was a relatively minor incident. Far more important was the fullscale air war initiated by the United States one month before the invasion began, and which has continued until this very day.

It took five and one half years in Laos before outsiders were able to begin documenting the effects of the air war on the civilian population, due to highly successful news management by the American government. The situation is even more difficult in Cambodia, where few outsiders speak Cambodian due to a decision by the Nixon administration not to send in volunteers and AID officials trained in the language.

Nonetheless, as the earlier edition of *The Air War in Indochina* noted in October 1971, "The relationship between air power and civilian casualties and refugees in Cambodia is not as clearly defined as it is in Laos or South Vietnam, but the evidence available suggests a similar pattern. The use of air power in close air support of South Vietnamese and Cambodian ground operations, is, according to the Refugee Subcommittee, 'contributing much to the rising toll being paid by civilians.' Many towns and villages were totally destroyed or severely damaged by American air power during the first weeks of the invasion in May 1970, including Snoul, Mimot, Sre Khtum, and Kompong Cham. The list grows longer as the air war drags on: Skoun in July and August 1970, and Prey Totung in December."

On December 5, 1971, the *New York Times* reported that, according to an official study of the U.S. Government Accounting Office, "more than two million Cambodians have been driven from their homes . . . since . . . the spring of 1970. . . . Bombing is a very significant cause of refugee and civilian casualties." The same report revealed that 26 percent of Cambodian territory had come under saturation bombing. Numerous interviews with Cambodian refugees, including stories in the *New York Times* on December 4 and 5, 1971, have made it clear that American bombing was the major reason for the generation of Cambodian refugees.

A striking aspect of the Nixon administration's policies in Cambodia has been its total disregard of refugee needs. Unlike Laos and South Vietnam, where at least some minimal attention was given to providing enough food to keep refugees alive, the administration has made no funds available for the relief of Cambodian refugees.

And, as in Laos,* the Nixon administration has carried out parallel escallations on the ground. The Lon Nol army has been enlarged from some 40,000 at the time of the coup to well over 150,000 today; a polyglot Secret Army, part of the CIA's 100,000-man force stretching throughout Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam, has been pressed into action in Cambodia, with the brunt of the heaviest fighting born by Cambodian mercenaries who had been living in South Vietnam and fighting under the name of the Komphong Khrom; and ARVN forces have made continuous sweeps through Cambodia, carrying out widespread looting and raping, and giving every sign of planning to occupy portions of southeastern Cambodia permanently, to the consternation of Lon Nol officials.**

And in addition to taking the war into Laos and Cambodia, the Nixon administration also resumed the bombing of North Vietnam. Between January 1969 and March 30, 1972, North Vietnam was struck on more than 325 admitted occasions. These occasions included at least nine "limited duration protective reaction strikes." Though sold to the public as defensive in nature, these "limited reaction" strikes in reality involved hundreds of aircraft striking throughout the southern portion of North Vietnam for periods ranging from several days to one week. As visitors to North Vietnam subsequently discovered, these raids were as destructive to the civilian population as had been those carried out between 1965 and 1968.

To sum it all up, then, the Nixon administration had dropped over 3.3 million tons of bombs on Indochina, more bombs than had been dropped by any government in history, before their adversaries began their offensive on March 30, 1972. Its term in office had already seen over 3 million civilians killed, wounded or refugeed, according to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Refugees; and, while most of this carnage had occurred in Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam, even civilian and military casualties within South Vietnam were running at roughly the same levels as 1967, a year in which there were 450,000 American ground troops in that country.

Much of this information had been hidden from the American public; reporters had not been allowed out on bombing raids or flown to the front lines outside of South Vietnam during the Nixon years, and so the war had slowly been disappearing from the TV screens and newspaper front pages; all information which might cause domestic repercussions, such as the incidence of use of antipersonnel weapons and their effects on the human body, had been "classified" out of public reach; and the administration had successfully created its own Orwellian image of a sterile, antiseptic air war, one in which only military targets are bombed, villages are rarely if ever hit, and only defensive "protective reaction" strikes are carried out against North Vietnam.

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* As Senator Edward Kennedy, chairman of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Refugees, noted on May 3, 1972: ". . . there are approximately 2 million people who are refugees in Cambodia today, and yet the United States fails to provide even one dollar of help and assistance for the refugees in Cambodia. . . . Today, after two years of heavy battle—which began with an American-sponsored invasion from South Vietnam—a [Government Accounting Office] report on Cambodia documents: 'That it is the policy of the U.S. "to not become involved with the problems of civilian war victims in Cambodia."'" (See *Congressional Record,* May 3, 1972, S 7183–7184).

** These ground and aerial escalations have been no more successful in Cambodia than they were in Laos. At this writing the Lon Nol regime controls little more than Phnom Penh and a few other provincial capitals. Guerrillas officially control about two-thirds of Cambodia, and move at ease through most of the rest of the land.

But their import was not lost on the guerrillas of Indochina. They knew all too well that the war was not "winding down," that, on the contrary, the ground war had merely been transformed into an even more vicious and indiscriminate air war; that the Nixon administration had no more intention of withdrawing than had the Truman administration when it first massively intervened twenty-two years earlier. Unless they wished to submit to a permanent American occupation of the southern half of Vietnam and the populated areas of Laos and Cambodia, they had no choice but to launch an offensive.

Events had exploded one by one the rationales used by American leaders to justify their intervention in Indochina: the Pentagon Papers, following hundreds of newspaper and TV reports over the years, followed by Thieu's one-man election in October 1971, had successfully exposed the myth that American involvement was designed to bring about a democratic and fuller life for the Vietnamese; Nixon's trip to China in February 1972 had weakened the argument that the United States had to remain in Indochina for fear of China; and there was growing awareness that not only would continued fighting indefinitely prolong the internment of American pilots who had already been captured and create new prisoners daily, but that there was a good chance that captured pilots could return home if the United States would commit itself to total withdrawal.

There was but one last substantive rationale that had to be destroyed, from the guerrillas' point of view: the rationale that "Vietnamization" was working, that somehow the loss of 50,000 American lives, 300,000 American wounded, and 200 billion American dollars, could be redeemed by a pro-American regime that could remain in power, that not only would the people of the United States have to decide if their leaders were war criminals, but whether it was these leaders—or domestic antiwar forces—who had betrayed their country by causing it to lose in Vietnam.

And so, on March 30, 1972, guerrilla forces began their most ambitious offensive since Tet 1968, an offensive which would force the American people to choose between a President committed to indefinite warfare in Indochina or an opponent who would at least give greater hope of finally withdrawing—not because he necessarily wanted to, but because he had to.

IV. THE BOMBING OF HAIPHONG AND BEYOND

> USAF personnel in Southeast Asia may now outnumber Army troops for the first time in the 11-year war in Vietnam. Under administration withdrawal plans, total U.S. strength "in country" in South Vietnam was to drop to 69,000 by May 1 . . . most of the withdrawals were expected to be Army. . . . The Air Force had only 20,300 members in Vietnam on April 6. . . . AF has moved additional units into South Vietnam to counter the new enemy offensive, so the total personnel strength in-country is higher than on April 6. . . .
>
> The Pentagon's "in-country" strength figures—the ones the President cites in his withdrawal announcements—do not count the AF forces in Thailand or Guam or Navy men off shore aboard ships. Thus, the additional B-52s AF has sent to Guam and the Navy carriers and other vessels added to the offshore fleet technically do not count in the withdrawal arithmetic.
>
> —*Air Force Times*, April 26, 1972, p. 2

When John Kennedy or Lyndon Johnson chose to escalate in Vietnam, they sent in more ground troops; nothing revealed the Nixon administration's commitment to automated war more than the fact that its escalations have been carried out by the dispatch of more machines.

Between 1969 and 1971 the administration's main innovation in the air war—besides the "area denial" program—had been the increased use of electronic gunships. These gunships, including the A-119 "Shadow" and A-130 "Spectre," are characterized by highly sophisticated electronic devices. Oscilloscopes on board, picking up signals from acoustic and seismic sensors down below, infra-red scopes designed to pick up heat emissions, and radar to track moving objects, provided the intelligence for immediate strikes. On reception of such intelligence, the gunships—which only go out at night and fly at a level of about 5,000 feet—would spew out a withering rain of fire from six guns, each shooting at a rate of 6,000 rounds per minute. Bullets would put a hole every square foot in an area the size of a football field down below.

Although exact figures are not available, the Nixon administration is known to have dispatched dozens of new gunships to the Indochina theater between 1969 and 1971.

Nixon's major escalations in the air war, however, began in February 1972—two months before the guerrilla offensive began. In that month the administration doubled the number of B-52s operating in Indochina from forty to eighty, doubled aircraft carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin from two to four, and dispatched several new squadrons of F-4 Phantoms and gunships.

But February 1972 is also noteworthy for another reason: this is the month in which the Nixon administration resumed heavy bombing of South Vietnam. While the administration had steadily escalated the bombing in Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam between 1969 and 1971, it had decreased the bombing within South Vietnam. By resuming heavy B-52 and jet bombing within the South in February 1972, the model of Laos was finally applied in a massive and relentless manner throughout the Indochinese peninsula.

The March 30 offensive soon saw a flagrant commitment to automated war so obvious that none could miss it. The number of B-52s was raised again, up to 130; a flood of new jets and gunships was unleashed, until by May 6 the number had nearly tripled to 900–1,000; aircraft carriers were once more increased, from four to six; and the administration even chose to re-activate Takhli Air Base in Thailand.

The ultimate outcome of this escalated air war is not yet clear at this writing. The guerrilla victory at Quang Tris made it clear that they will make much progress on the ground against a demoralized ARVN. But it is difficult to see how the guerrillas can hold large swatches of politically significant territory in the face of saturation B-52 bombings designed to destroy towns and villages in order to save them.

It seems safe to predict, though, that this offensive will have serious political effects. Nixon will no longer be able to claim that he seriously intends to withdraw, or that "Vietnamization" can work.

Like Tet 1968, whatever happens on the battlefield the 1972 spring offensive may launch political ripples back here in the United States which will eventually lead to withdrawal. Once more, it may well be the guerrillas who win if they do not lose.

Whatever happens in the long run, however, one thing is assured for the foreseeable future: continued American devastation of Indochina, perhaps going beyond anything seen to date.

At this writing, in early May 1972, the Nixon administration's giant armada of 900 strike aircraft, 150 B-52s, four to six carriers, and several dozen destroyers are—after a decade of practice in Vietnam—unmatched in technological sophistication in the history of warfare.

More importantly, all indications are that this force is poised on the brink of unprecedented devastation in Indochina.

In this respect, the B-52 saturation bombing of the city of Haiphong on the night of April 14, 1972, marks a watershed in the war. By taking this action, the Nixon administration clearly threw down the gauntlet—to its foes at home as well as in Indochina. To understand why, it is important to put the strikes against Haiphong into the perspective of the last eight years.

The significance of the bombing of Haiphong was not only that the sudden, high-level, nighttime, carpet bombing of an area inhabited by 300,000 people was an act of uncommon savagery. It was that until then Haiphong has stood as a symbol of ultimate American restraint in the face of intense domestic and worldwide criticism of the U.S. air war against Vietnam. By bombing Haiphong, the Nixon administration served clear notice that it would stop at nothing in its attempt to maintain its position in Indochina.

Conventional wisdom had held that the administration would keep to a low profile in Vietnam in this crucial Presidential election year. The bombing of Haiphong, however, made it clear that Nixon places a far greater priority on victory in Vietnam. It was no longer unrealistic to suggest that only massive domestic and international protest and resistance may halt the total destruction of Hanoi and Haiphong, the mining of Haiphong harbor, devastation of the North's dike system, or even more blatant acts of mass murder.

The following facts have been widely noted:

1. THE B-52 BOMBING OF HAIPHONG WAS MASSIVE, INDISCRIMINATE AND UNPRECEDENTED

The Johnson Administration bombed Haiphong regularly from 1966 through 1968. But these strikes were limited in the "Prohibited Areas" of four nautical miles around Haiphong center. As a March 1968 Joint Chiefs of Staff memo noted, "The prohibited areas were created in December 1966. Numerous strikes, however, have been permitted in these areas over the past two and one-half years, e.g., dispersed POL, SAM and AAA sites . . ." (Gravel ed., IV:255).

These past raids, however, were carried out by jet bombers with a relatively limited radius of bombing destruction. April 15, 1972, was not only the first time that B-52s were sent over Haiphong; the use of dozens of these giant bombers ensured that saturation bombing occurred for the first tmie in the Haiphong area.

B-52s are huge eight-engined aircraft with a crew of six and two 2,500 gallon wing tanks. Each sortie carries twenty-five to thirty tons of bombs, either as 108 500-pound bombs or sixty-six 750-pound bombs or some combination thereof. Bombing from 30,000 to 35,000 feet, B-52s leave craters thirty-five feet deep by forty-five feet in diameter with their 500 pounders. A typical B-52 strike involves six B-52s saturating a selected grid square, leaving a swath of destruction half a mile wide by three miles long. (See *The Air War in Indochina,* p. 25.)

The fact that dozens of these giant bombers were sent out at night ensured that saturation and indiscriminate bombing of this heavily populated area was carried out. For at night, even the light spotter planes which sometimes guide B-52 raids in the daytime for greater precision were unavailable. Neither, of course, were the ground spotters who made more precise B-52 bombing possible during the siege of Khe Sanh.

2. THE USE OF B-52S OVER HAIPHONG NECESSARILY LED TO HEAVY CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Even when the air war against North Vietnam was carried out only by jets, the bombing caused heavy civilian casualties. As the Cornell Air War study notes, "targets . . . in a strategic bombing campaign are situated near predominately civilian areas. . . . The bombing inflicted severe civilian damage on the civilian society as a whole. . . . In 1967 the noncombatant casualty rate was quoted at 1,000 per week (Robert McNamara). . . . And the equivalent casualty rate in the U.S. would be more than 600,000 per year" (*The Air War in Indochina,* p. 48).

The official population of Haiphong and its suburbs in 1960 was 369,248. Although many children and others were removed from the city during the mid-sixties, many returned after the November 1968 bombing halt. Given the population growth and surprise of the April 14 bombing attack, there may have been well over 300,000 people in the area hit by the B-52s.

The Pentagon Papers make clear, moreover, that the heavy civilian casualties expected to occur from bombing Haiphong—and the worldwide protest they would entail—were the main reasons that Johnson did not agree to level it. As a memo of the ISA, prepared in Undersecretary of Defense Warnke's office, reported: "Experience has indicated that systematic operations particularly against repair burdens, while at the same time involving substantial civilian casualties in road and rail routes [in the Hanoi-Haiphong area] adds simply and slightly to the many suburban civilian areas located along these routes" (Gravel ed., IV: 257).

Civilian casualties from the bombing, moreover, are by far the greatest portion. As a summary of the bombing of North Vietnam noted in 1966, "Estimated civilian and military casualties in NVN *also went up, from 13,000 to 23–24,000* (*about 80% civilians*)" (Gravel ed., IV:136, emphasis added).

But although the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not dispute the heavy damage to civilians, they did not stop pushing for bombing Haiphong in any event. As the Pentagon Papers reported in October 1967, "in addition to mining the harbors, the chiefs requested that the comprehensive prohibition in the Hanoi/Haiphong areas be removed with the expected increase in civilian casualties to be accepted as militarily justified and necessary" (Gravel ed., IV:215).

The attitude of the military was put somewhat more pungently by Marine Commandant General Wallace Greene in testimony before the Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee, October 23, 1967: "We are at war with North Vietnam right now, today, and we shouldn't be so much interested in their anger as we are in bringing the war home to everyone of them up there." Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson was even more explicit: "I put 'innocent' civilians in quotation marks," he stated.

The B-52 bombing of Haiphong clearly illustrates that the military had succeeded beyond its wildest dreams. Even at the height of the air war in 1968, there was no talk of loosing B-52s on the Hanoi/Haiphong area.

There was no need to wait several months for the inevitable reports by American visitors to Haiphong of heavy civilian casualties from the April 15 raids.

The official report of widespread use of B-52s in the most heavily populated area of Indochina is evidence enough.

3. THE B-52ING OF HAIPHONG SERVED NO USEFUL MILITARY END; ITS PRIMARY GOAL WAS TO TERRORIZE THE VIETNAMESE INTO SUBMISSION

The Haiphong bombing was of limited military significance and could have little effect on the fighting in the South.

An October 1967 CIA study clearly stated that a bombing campaign against lines of communication (LOCs)—such as roads and railroads—leading out of Haiphong would be useless. "Prospects are dim that an air interdiction campaign against LOCs leading out of Haiphong alone could cut off the flow of seaborne imports and isolate Haiphong" (Gravel ed., IV: 215).

The same report went on to conclude that even mining Haiphong Harbor would be militarily ineffective: ". . . the combined interdiction of land and water routes, including the mining of the water approaches to the major ports and the bombing of ports and trans shipment facilities . . . would . . . not be able to cut off the flow of essential supplies and, by itself, would not be the determining factor in shaping Hanoi's outlook to the war" (Gravel ed., IV: 215).

The reason is simple. *Most of North Vietnam's military supplies do not come through Haiphong, but through China.* As a study carried out under Defense Secretary Clifford noted in March 1968, "the remaining issue on interdiction of supplies had to do with the closing of the port of Haiphong. Although this is the route by which some 80 percent of NVN imports come into the country, it is not the point of entry for most of the military supplies and ammunition. These materials predominately enter via the rail routes from China. The closing of Haiphong port would not prevent the continued supply of sufficient materials to maintain North Vietnamese military operations in the South" (Gravel ed., IV: 251).

Indeed, the Clifford group concluded that an attack on Haiphong would actually be counterproductive: "Apprehensions about bombing attacks that would destroy Hanoi and Haiphong may at some time help move them toward productive negotiations. Actual destruction of these areas would eliminate a threat that could influence them to seek a political settlement on terms acceptable to us" (Gravel ed., IV: 252).

Why then was Haiphong attacked by B-52s on April 15?

The answer was put rather delicately by a *New York Times* article of April 14, 1972: "In a comment on the report of B-52s going north: administration officials disclosed today that . . . 'the objectives were diplomatic and political as well as military.' "

Since the evidence is overwhelming that the attacks against Hanoi serve little useful military purpose, the only conclusion is that they are primarily "diplomatic" and "political."

In fact, John McNaughton put it more clearly in a January 18, 1966, memo: "To avoid the allegation that we are practicing 'pure blackmail,' the targets should be military targets and the declaratory policy . . . should be that our objective is only to destroy military targets" (Gravel ed., IV:45).

The B-52ing of Haiphong and the later attacks against Hanoi were clearly little more than "pure blackmail."

Faced with a deteriorating military situation in South Vietnam, the Nixon administration responded by launching sneak terror attacks against Haiphong and Hanoi in an attempt to terrorize the Vietnamese into submission.

4. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER THAT THESE ATTACKS COULD SUCCEED; ON THE CONTRARY, THEY PROLONGED THE WAR, BROUGHT MORE POWS, AND OPENED UP THE PROSPECT OF FAR GREATER ESCALATION

The notion that bombing Hanoi and Haiphong would break the will of the Vietnamese is patently absurd. In October 1967, after the United States had already dropped nearly 300,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam, a top-level JASON study of the bombing concluded: "The expectation that bombing would erode the determination of Hanoi and its people clearly overestimated the persuasive and disruptive effects of the bombing and, correspondingly, underestimated the tenacity and recuperative capabilities of the North Vietnamese. That the bombing has not achieved anticipated goals reflects a general failure to appreciate the fact, well-documented in the historical and social scientific literature, that a direct, frontal attack on a society tends to strengthen the social fabric of the nation, to increase popular support of the existing government, to improve the determination of both the leadership and the populace to fight back, to induce a variety of protective measures that reduce the society's vulnerability to future attack and to develop an increased capacity for quick repairs and restoration of essential functions. The great variety of physical and social countermeasures that North Vietnam has taken in response to the bombing is now well documented but the potential effectiveness of these countermeasures has not been adequately considered in previous planning or assessment studies (Gravel ed., IV:224).

From the Vietnamese point of view, the 1972 spring offensive was not merely a continuation of a struggle of a month, year or even 25 years. It was seen as an integral part of a fight of 1000 years to see their country independent from foreign aggression, free and unified. To suggest that they would—or could—halt their offensive under the threat of saturation bombing was clearly ridiculous.

The desperate and reckless quality of the bombing was, however, no more dramatically illustrated than by its effect on the sensitive issue of captured American pilots.

To begin with, such bombing drastically increases the number of American pilots who are shot down and captured. Over 350 men who were alive and well when Richard Nixon took office were listed as captured or missing in action before the April 15 raids. The escalation in bombing over Hanoi and Haiphong—a heavily defended area—greatly enlarges their number. On April 15 alone Hanoi radio reported shooting down four jets and one B-52, for a total of fourteen men. In the week ending April 11 alone, nineteen men were listed as missing in action, most of them airmen.

In addition, such an escalation of the bombing ensures the prolongation of internment of those men already captured, men who could be brought home were the Nixon administration to negotiate an end to American involvement in Indochina.

And, most seriously, attacks against Hanoi/Haiphong greatly endanger the lives of those pilots now in captivity. As the study prepared under Clark Clifford reported in March 1968 states: "Although the North Vietnamese do not mark the camps where American prisoners are kept . . . heavy and indiscriminate attacks in the Hanoi area would jeopardize the lives of these prisoners and alarm their wives and parents into vocal opposition" (Gravel ed., IV:251–252).

The Nixon administration's willingness to even risk drastically inflaming the delicate POW issue in this Presidential election year ominously suggested that it had abandoned reason.

In this situation, anything was possible.

The most likely possibility in the wake of April 15 was that the administration would wipe Hanoi and Haiphong off the map.

Another prospect, more remote but still possible, was that it would go so far as to bomb North Vietnam's dike system.

By the beginning of June, the waters of the Red River Delta are swollen by rains, and the danger of flooding is at its greatest. North Vietnam's greatest vulnerability has always been the ease with which the U.S. bombing could flood the country's rice-growing area and cause massive famine which could kill millions of people. High Air Force officers pressed hard for the bombing of the dike systems in the North during the Johnson administration, and although bombing policy never went so far as an all-out effort against the system, the dikes were often hit as part of the effort to raise the cost for the civilian population. In May and July 1966, for example, authorities of Nam Dinh city told *New York Times* correspondent Harrison Salisbury that U.S. planes had dropped six bombs on two kilometers of dikes which protected the city against floods, causing damage to many sections. Asked to comment later, the Defense Department did not deny the charge. According to Christopher Beal of the moderate Republican Ripon Society, some "punitive bombing" of Red River delta dikes was reported to him by "reputable non-Communist sources" in the summer of 1967, when the waters were at their seasonal high.

Whether or not this happened, however, April 15 had seen a dramatic escalation. Much of what would happen thereafter would be blacked out. On April 12, the Pentagon announced that from now on it would "probably not" give information to the public on U.S. bombing raids on any "regular" basis.

But whatever did happen it was clear that on April 15 the Nixon administration had crossed the Rubicon on Vietnam. It was not only that the bombing of Haiphong committed the administration irrevocably to remaining on in Indochina. It was that millions of Americans learned for the first time that their government had been lying to them for three years when it had implied it was willing to withdraw, that there was a "secret plan" for ending the war. The combination produced by a pathology of power on the part of U.S. officials—together with one of powerlessness on the part of millions of antiwar citizens—had almost torn the country apart in 1968.

If the Nixon administration continues to bomb the North in 1972, the implications seemed even graver.

What was most distressing to many of us as of April 15 was not merely that we had no idea how far the administration will go; it was a growing realization, buttressed by the Pentagon Papers, that the administration did not know either. One thing did seem clear, however: Despite the millions who had already been killed and maimed, the 5 million acres of crop and forest land destroyed, the 10 million refugees, the 100,000 political prisoners, the thousands of villages and towns that no longer exist, the 400,000 prostitutes, the disease and hunger, the 23 million bomb craters, the corruption and degradation of ancient cultures and social systems, it was all far from over.

Indeed, at this writing, the pathological destruction of Indochina by American leaders may have only begun.

A Note on the Three Editions of the Pentagon Papers

There are three published editions of the Pentagon Papers. None is complete. These notes are intended as an aid to the reader of the Gravel edition, in understanding how it differs from the other published editions of the Papers.

The Gravel edition contains the entire manuscript which Senator Mike Gravel entered into the record of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds of June 29, 1971. This material does not embody the whole Defense Department study, but only those portions which had come into the Senator's possession at that time. The full Defense Department study contained about 7,800 pages, while the material entered into the Senate record, and reprinted in the Gravel edition, consisted of about 4,100 pages of manuscript.

The New York Times edition of the Pentagon Papers, published by Bantam Books and Quadrangle Press, is a summary prepared by the staff of that newspaper, along with a selection of documents from the Papers and elsewhere. All documents in this edition which were not in the Gravel manuscript were reprinted in the Gravel edition and their source noted.

While the Gravel edition was on the presses, the Defense Department released its declassified version of the Pentagon Papers. This was subsequently published, in limited quantity, by the Government Printing Office. From this United States Government edition it is possible to infer what is not present in the Gravel edition.

No table of contents was included with the Gravel manuscript. (Even the official title of the Defense Department study, "United States–Vietnam Relations 1945–1967," was not known at the time the Gravel edition went to press.) Thus, in preparing the Gravel edition for publication, a chapter sequence was chosen which provided a convenient, nearly chronological four-volume format. With the publication of the USG edition, an "outline of studies" as a table of contents became available, and it was then possible to determine what the "proper" order should be. Table I, the published "outline" of the original study, is a locater for both the Gravel edition and the USG edition.

As Table I (pages 316–318) shows, several sections describing the pre-1960 period are missing from the Gravel edition. In addition, only about one-fourth of the documents included with the original study were available with the Gravel material.

On the other hand, the version released by the Defense Department, and published by GPO, had a number of pages and individual sentences deleted. Much of this material is included in the Gravel edition; it appears on the pages shown in Table II (page 319).

The Defense Department has not provided any public rationale for its deletions. The omitted items include communications from foreign governments, especially during the 1954 Geneva Conference; narrative material and documents demonstrating American complicity in the coup that toppled Diem; narrative material and documents describing clandestine naval and air attacks on North Vietnam; descriptions of political weakness and corruption in South Vietnam and of American involvement in South Vietnamese governmental processes; assertions of American willingness to use nuclear weapons if China intervened; descriptions of the decision, in 1964, to initiate the bombing of Laos, with the knowledge and consent of the Laotian government; assessments of Soviet actions and of their likely reactions to American moves; descriptions of the use of Canadian and other intermediaries with the North Vietnamese; information on the presence and location of North Vietnamese units in South Vietnam, and acknowledgment that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong electronic communications had been intercepted.

The Gravel edition includes 110 documents from the Johnson Administration which were not included with the original study. Although the USG edition reports, in Book 12, that "a separate volume covers the Johnson Administration," this volume of documents is not listed in the Government's "outline" and probably was never assembled.

Some of the manuscript pages in the Gravel material were indistinct, notably at the tops and bottoms of pages. This problem was especially severe in Chapter III. 2 and, to some extent, Chapter III. 3. The illegible or missing material was either bridged by removing the entire sentence in which it appeared, when it was evident that no substantive material would be lost by this procedure, or the omission was indicated by a bracketed statement. A comparison with the USG edition shows that no serious omission resulted. In addition, the even-numbered pages were missing from the Gravel material dealing with the Tonkin Gulf episode (Gravel ed., III:182–190). Since this material is likely to be of interest to many readers, that section is reprinted here (pages 320–341), with the missing material drawn from the USG edition.

TABLE 1

Gravel Edition Volume and Chapter	*The Text of OSD Vietnam Task Force Outline of Studies*	*U.S. Government Edition Book Number*
*	I. *Vietnam and the U.S., 1940–1950*	Book 1
I:1	A. U.S. Policy, 1940–50	
[1]	B. The Character and Power of the Viet Minh	
[1]	C. Ho Chi Minh: Asian Tito?	
*	II. *U.S. Involvement in the Franco–Viet Minh War, 1950–1954*	
I:2	A. U.S., France and Vietnamese Nationalism	
I:2	B. Toward a Negotiated Settlement	
I:3 [2]	III. *The Geneva Accords*	
	A. U.S. Military Planning and Diplomatic Maneuver	
	B. Role and Obligations of State of Vietnam	
	C. Viet Minh Position and Sino-Soviet Strategy	
	D. The Intent of the Geneva Accords	
*	IV. *Evolution of the War*	
*	A. U.S. MAP for Diem: The Eisenhower Commitments, 1954–1960	
†	1. NATO and SEATO: A Comparison	
I:4	2. Aid for France in Indochina, 1950–54	
I:4	3. U.S. and France's Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1954–56	
†	4. U.S. Training of Vietnamese National Army, 1954–59	Book 2
I:5 [3]	5. Origins of the Insurgency	
*	B. Counterinsurgency: The Kennedy Commitments, 1961–1963	
II:1	1. The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961	
II:2	2. Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961–63	Book 3
II:6	3. The Advisory Build-up, 1961–67	
II:3	4. Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, 1962–64	
II:4	5. The Overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem, May–Nov. 1963	
*	C. Direct Action: The Johnson Commitments, 1964–1968	
III:1	1. U.S. Programs in South Vietnam, November 1963–April 1965: NSAM 273—NSAM 288—Honolulu	

NOTES TO TABLE I ARE FOUND ON PAGE 318.

Gravel Edition Volume and Chapter	*The Text of OSD Vietnam Task Force Outline of Studies*	*U.S. Government Edition Book Number*
III:2	2. Military Pressures Against NVN	Book 4
	a. February–June 1964	
	b. July–October 1964	
	c. November–December 1964	
III:3	3. ROLLING THUNDER Program Begins: January–June 1965	
III:4	4. Marine Combat Units Go to DaNang, March 1965	
III:4	5. Phase I in the Build-up of U.S. Forces: March–July 1965	
IV:2	6. U.S. Ground Strategy and Force Deployments: 1965–1967	Book 5
	a. Volume I: Phase II, Program 3, Program 4	
	b. Volume II: Program 5	
	c. Volume III: Program 6	
IV:1	7. Air War in the North: 1965–1968	Book 6
	a. Volume I	
	b. Volume II	
II:7	8. Re-emphasis on Pacification: 1965–1967	
II:5	9. U.S.–GVN Relations	Book 7
	a. Volume 1: December 1963–June 1965	
	b. Volume 2: July 1965–December 1967	
†	10. Statistical Survey of the War, North and South: 1965–1967	
*	V. *Justification of the War*	
*	A. Public Statements	
I	Volume I: A—The Truman Administration	
I	B—The Eisenhower Administration	
II	C—The Kennedy Administration	
III–IV	Volume II: D—The Johnson Administration	
*	B. Internal Documents	
†	1. The Roosevelt Administration	
*	2. The Truman Administration	Book 8
†	a. Volume I: 1945–1949	
I[4]	b. Volume II: 1950–1952	

Gravel Edition Volume and Chapter	*The Text of OSD Vietnam Task Force Outline of Studies*	*U.S. Government Edition Book Number*
*	3. The Eisenhower Administration	Book 9
I[4]	a. Volume I: 1953	
I[4]	b. Volume II: 1954—Geneva	
†	c. Volume III: Geneva Accords—15 March 1956	Book 10
†	d. Volume IV: 1956 French Withdrawal—1960	
II[4]	4. The Kennedy Administration	Book 11
	Book I	
	Book II	Book 12
*	VI. *Settlement of the Conflict*	
†	A. Negotiations, 1965–67: The Public Record	
†	B. Negotiations, 1965–67: Announced Position Statements	
[5]	C. Histories of Contacts (This material not printed)	
	1. 1965–1966 (This material not printed)	
	2. Polish Track (This material not printed)	
	3. Moscow London Track (This material not printed)	
	4. 1967–1968 (This material not printed)	

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* The entries marked with an * are "outline" entries in the USG edition and do not represent any text except, in some instances, for brief editorial comments from the compilers.

† The entries marked with a † are missing from the Gravel edition.

[1] Summaries of these sections are included in the Summary portion of Gravel I:1.

[2] Chapter I:3 of the Gravel edition appears to be an early draft of the study included in the USG edition.

[3] This section of the Defense Department study contains four "tabs" or sub-sections. The Gravel edition includes the Summary of the entire section, a portion of the first tab (pp. 11–33 of the USG edition are not present), and all of the second tab. The third, entitled "The Role of Hanoi," and the fourth, "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954–1960," are not in Gravel.

[4] Only portions of the documents in these sections are present in the Gravel edition.

[5] This section is omitted from both the Gravel and USG editions.

TABLE II

Deletions from the United States Government Edition

GRAVEL VOLUME I:

Documents:	14,	pp. 390–391
	53	518–519
	66	539–540
	80	554–557
	83	560–561

GRAVEL VOLUME II:

Narrative: pp. 38, 211–213, 216–217, 217–218, 223, 237–238, 256–258, 271, 307–308, 318–319, 322, 333–334, 339–341

Documents:	98,	pp. 637–642
	144	767–768
	145	769
	150	782–783
	151	784–785
	154	789–792

GRAVEL VOLUME III:

Narrative: pp. 32–33, 36–39, 107–108, 160, 184–185, 195–198, 251–253, 266–267, 292, 325–326, 328, 330–331, 398–399, 401–402, 426–427. 429–430, 431

Documents: 156–256, pp. 486–706

GRAVEL VOLUME IV:

Narrative: pp. 71–73, 228, 246–247, 333, 334–335, 336, 381, 382–384, 407, 409, 446–447, 469, 485, 492, 518, 523–524, 578–579, 581, 582

Documents: 257–265, pp. 605–625

The Tonkin Gulf Narrative and Resolutions

I. PROLOGUE: ACTIONS AND PROGRAMS UNDERWAY

Several forms of pressure were already being applied against North Vietnam by July of 1964. Moreover, contingency plans for other forms—should political and military circumstances warrant a decision to use them—were continually being adjusted and modified as the situation in Southeast Asia developed.

The best known of these pressures was being applied in Laos. Since 21 May, U.S. aircraft had flown low-level reconnaissance missions over communist-occupied areas. In early June Premier Souvanna Phouma both gave and reaffirmed his permission for armed escort of these missions, which included the right to retaliate against hostile fire from the ground. This effort was supplemented at the end of the month when the United States decided to conduct transport and night reconnaissance operations and furnish additional T-28 aircraft and munitions to support a Royal Laotian counteroffensive near Muong Soui. This decision came in response to Souvanna's request, in which he equated the protection of Muong Soui with the survival of the Laotian neutralist army. Air strikes conducted by the Royal Lao Air Force, with T-28s obtained from the United States, were later credited with playing a major role in the success of the RLG's operations.

Other actions obviously designed to forestall communist aggressive intentions were taken in different parts of Southeast Asia. In June, following the Honolulu strategy conference, State and Defense Department sources made repeated leaks to the press affirming U.S. intentions to support its allies and uphold its treaty commitments in Southeast Asia. U.S. contingency ground-force stockages in Thailand were augmented and publicly acknowledged. Revelations were made that USAF aircraft were operating out of a newly constructed air base at Da Nang. Moreover, the base was characterized as part of a network of new air bases and operational facilities being developed in South Vietnam and Thailand. On 10 July, the Da Nang base was the site of a well-publicized Air Force Day display of allied airpower, including aircraft from a B-57 wing recently acknowledged to have been permanently deployed to the Philippines from Japan.

Less known were parallel actions taken within the Government. U.S. resolve to resist aggression in Southeast Asia was communicated directly to North Vietnam by the newly appointed Canadian member of the International Control Commission, Blair Seaborn. Stressing that U.S. ambitions were limited and its intentions were "essentially peaceful," Seaborn told Pham Van Dong that the patience of the U.S. Government was not limitless. He explained that the United States was fully aware of the degree to which Hanoi controlled the Viet Cong insurgency and the Pathet Lao and might be obliged to carry the war to the North if DRV-assisted pressures against South Vietnam continued. He further cautioned that U.S. stakes in resisting a North Vietnamese victory were high, since the United States saw the conflict in Southeast Asia as part of a general confrontation with guerrilla subversion in other parts of the world, and that "in the event of escalation the greatest devastation would of course result for the DRVN itself."

Also underway were efforts directed toward educating the American public regarding our national interests in Southeast Asia and the extent of the U.S. commitment there. In reporting to the President, Administration officials who participated in the Honolulu Conference stressed the need for a domestic information effort to "get at the basic doubts" of the importance of the U.S. stake in Southeast Asia. The program was to be focused both on key members of the Congress and on the public. Thereafter, work was begun under State Department guidance to assemble information in answer to some of the prevalent public questions on the U.S. involvement. Of special concern was a recent Gallup poll showing only 37 percent of the public to have some interest in our Southeast Asian policies. Administration officials viewed this group as consisting primarily of either those desiring our withdrawal or those urging our striking at North Vietnam. A general program was proposed with the avowed aims of eroding public support for these polar positions and solidifying a large "center" behind the thrust of current Administration policies. These aims were to be accomplished by directing public comment into discussions of the precise alternatives available to the United States, greater exposure to which it was believed would alienate both "hawk" and "dove" supporters. Less than a week after this proposal was submitted, the White House published a NSAM, naming its proponent, Robert Manning, as coordinator of all public information activities for Southeast Asia and directing all agencies to cooperate in furthering the Administration's information objectives. One of the principal foci of the subsequent information program was the compilation of a public pamphlet of questions raised by critics of Administration policy together with answers furnished and coordinated by several interested Government agencies.

Unknown to more than a limited number of Government officials were a variety of covert military or quasi-military operations being conducted at the expense of North Vietnam. U.S. naval forces had undertaken intermittent patrol operations in the Gulf of Tonkin designed to acquire visual, electronic and photographic intelligence on infiltration activities and coastal navigation from North Vietnam to the South. To carry out these missions, destroyers were assigned to tracks between fixed points and according to stipulated schedules. Designated DE SOTO Patrols, the first such operation of 1964 occurred during the period 28 February–10 March. On this patrol the U.S.S. Craig was authorized to approach to within 4 n.m. of the North Vietnamese mainland, 15 n.m. of the Chinese mainland and 12 n.m. of Chinese-held islands. No incidents were reported as resulting from this action. The next DE SOTO Patrol did not occur until 31 July, on which the U.S.S. *Maddox* was restricted to a track not closer then 8 n.m. off the North Vietnamese mainland. Its primary mission, assigned on 17 July, was "to determine DRV coastal activity along the full extent of the patrol track." Other specific intelligence requirements were assigned as follows:

> (a) location and identification of all radar transmitters, and estimate of range capabilities; (b) navigational and hydro information along the routes traversed and particular navigational lights characteristics, landmarks, buoys, currents and tidal information, river mouths and channel accessibility; (c) monitoring a junk force with density of surface traffic pattern; (d) sampling electronic environment radars and navigation aids; (e) photography of opportunities in support of above. . . .

Separate coastal patrol operations were being conducted by South Vietnamese naval forces. These were designed to uncover and interdict efforts to smuggle personnel and supplies into the South in support of the VC insurgency. This operation had first been organized with U.S. assistance in December 1961; to support it a fleet of motorized junks was built, partially financed with U.S. military assistance funds. During 1964 these vessels operated almost continually in attempts to intercept communist seaborne logistical operations. As Secretary McNamara told Senate committees:

> In the first seven months of this year [1964], they have searched 149,000 junks, some 570,000 people. This is a tremendous operation endeavoring to close the seacoasts of over 900 miles. In the process of that action, as the junk patrol has increased in strength they [*sic*] have moved farther and farther north endeavoring to find the source of the infiltration.

In addition to these acknowledged activities, the GVN was also conducting a number of operations against North Vietnam to which it did not publicly admit. Covert operations were carried out by South Vietnamese or hired personnel and supported by U.S. training and logistical efforts. Outlined within OPLAN 34A, these operations had been underway theoretically since February but had experienced what the JCS called a "slow beginning." Despite an ultimate objective of helping "convince the North Vietnamese leadership that it is in its own self-interest to desist from its aggressive policies," few operations designed to harass the enemy were carried out successfully during the February–May period. Nevertheless, citing DRV reactions tending "to substantiate the premise that Hanoi is expending substantial resources in defensive measures," the JCS concluded that the potential of the OPLAN 34-A program remained high and urged its continuation through Phase II (June–September). Operations including air-infiltration of sabotage teams, underwater demolition, and seizures of communist junks were approved for the period, and a few were carried by specially trained GVN forces during June and July.

In the process of combined GVN-U.S. planning, but not yet approved for execution, were cross-border operations against VC–North Vietnamese logistical routes in Laos. This planning provided for both air attacks by the VNAF and "ground operations up to battalion size" in the Laotian Panhandle. Preparations for such actions had been approved in principle since March but since then little further interest had been shown in them. Toward the end of July, the air force portion was examined seriously by Administration officials as a means not only to damage the Communist logistical effort but also "primarily for reasons of morale in South Vietnam and to divert GVN attention from [a] proposal to strike North Vietnam."

In addition to both the open and covert operations already underway, a number of other actions intended to bring pressure against North Vietnam had been recommended to the White House. Receiving considerable attention among Administration officials during May and June was a proposed request for a Congressional Resolution, reaffirming support by the legislators for Presidential action to resist Communist advances in Southeast Asia during an election year. In some respects paralleling this domestic initiative, the President was urged to present to the United Nations the detailed case assembled by the Government supporting the charges of DRV aggression against South Vietnam and Laos. He was also urged to authorize periodic deployments of additional forces toward Southeast Asia as a means of demonstrating U.S. resolve to undertake whatever measures were required to resist aggression in that region. Moreover, in OPLAN 37-64, there was fully developed a listing of forces to be deployed as a deterrent to communist escalation in reaction to U.S./GVN actions against North Vietnam. Finally, it was recommended that the President make the decision to use "selected and carefully graduated military force against North Vietnam" if necessary to improve non-Communist prospects in South Vietnam and Laos.

The source documents available to this writer are not clear on the exact decisions made in response to each of these recommendations, or indeed on the precise form or context in which the recommendations were presented. It is evident that the proposal to seek a Congressional Resolution was not favorably received, but as subsequent events indicate neither was it rejected out-of-hand. It proved very useful in largely the same language just two months later. Less certain are the decisions made about the other proposals. Certainly they were not approved for immediate implementation. However, it is not clear whether they were (1) flatly disapproved, (2) merely postponed, or (3) approved in principle, subject to gradual implementation. At the Honolulu Conference, where many of the proposed actions were discussed with U.S. officials from the theatre, many practical considerations were aired which showed that delayed implementation would be a reasonable course of action. But such factors would have provided equally valid reasons for either deciding against the proposals or for merely deferring a decision until a later, more appropriate time. The most significant point, for an understanding of the events and decisions of the second half of 1964, is that these options remained "on the shelf" for possible implementation should favorable circumstances arise.

II. THE TONKIN GULF CRISIS

Several of the pressuring measures recommended to the White House in May or June were implemented in conjunction with or in the immediate aftermath of naval action in the Tonkin Gulf. It is this fact and the rapidity with which these measures were taken that has led critics to doubt some aspects of the public account of the Tonkin incidents. It is also this fact, together with later Administration assessments of the Tonkin Gulf experience, that give the incidents greater significance than the particular events seemed at first to warrant.

THE FIRST INCIDENT

What happened in the Gulf? As noted eariler, U.S.S. *Maddox* commenced the second DE SOTO Patrol on 31 July. On the prior night South Vietnamese coastal patrol forces made a midnight attack, including an amphibious "commando" raid, on Hon Me and Hon Nieu Islands, about 19° N. latitude. At the time of this attack, U.S.S. *Maddox* was 120–130 miles away just heading into waters off North Vietnam. On 2 August, having reached the northernmost point on its patrol track and having headed South, the destroyer was intercepted by three North Vietnamese patrol boats. Apparently, these boats and a fleet of junks had moved into the area near the island to search for the attacking force and had mistaken *Maddox* for a South Vietnamese escort vessel. (Approximately eleven hours earlier, while on a northerly heading, *Maddox* had altered course to avoid the junk concentration shown on her radar; about six hours after that—now headed South—*Maddox* had altered her course to the southeast to avoid the junks a second time.) When the PT boats began their high-speed run at her, at a distance of approximately 10 miles, the destroyer was 28 miles from the coast and heading farther into international waters. Two of the boats closed to within 5,000 yards, launching one torpedo each. As they approached, *Maddox* fired on the boats with her 5-inch batteries and altered course to avoid the torpedoes, which were observed passing the starboard side at a distance of 100 to 200 yards. The third boat moved up abeam of the destroyer and took a direct 5-inch hit; it managed to launch a torpedo which failed to run. All three PT boats fired 50-caliber machine guns at *Maddox* as they made their firing runs, and a bullet fragment was recovered from the destroyer's superstructure. The attacks occurred in mid-afternoon, and photographs were taken of the torpedo boats as they attacked.

Upon first report of the PT boats' apparently hostile intent, four F-8E aircraft were launched from the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga,* many miles to the South, with instructions to provide air cover but not to fire unless they or *Maddox* were fired upon. As *Maddox* continued in a southerly direction, *Ticonderoga*'s aircraft attacked the two boats that had initiated the action. Both were damaged with Zuni rockets and 20mm gunfire. The third boat, struck by the destroyer's 5-inch, was already dead in the water. After about eight minutes, the aircraft broke off their attacks. In the meantime, *Maddox* had been directed by the 7th Fleet Commander to retire from the area to avoid hostile fire. Following their attacks on the PT's, the aircraft joined *Maddox* and escorted her back toward South Vietnamese waters where she joined a second destroyer, *C. Turner Joy.* The two ships continued to patrol in international waters. Approximately two hours after the action, in early evening, reconnaissance aircraft from *Ticonderoga* located the damaged PT's and obtained two photographs. The third boat was last seen burning and presumed sunk.

On 3 August a note of protest was dispatched to the Hanoi Government, reportedly through the International Control Commission for Indo-China. Directed by the President, the note stressed the unprovoked nature of the North Vietnamese attack and closed with the following warning:

> The U.S. Government expects that the authorities of the regime in North Vietnam will be under no misapprehension as to the grave consequences which would inevitably result from any further unprovoked offensive military action against U.S. forces.

On that same day, measures were taken to increase the security of the DE SOTO Patrol, the approved schedule of which still had two days to run. At 1325 hours (Washington time) the JCS approved a CINCPAC request to resume the patrol at a distance of 11 n.m. from the North Vietnamese coast. Later in the day, President Johnson announced that he had approved doubling the patrolling force and authorized active defensive measures on the part of both the destroyers and their escorting aircraft. His press statement included the following:

> I have instructed the Navy:
>
> 1. To continue the patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of North Vietnam.
> 2. To double the force by adding an additional destroyer to the one already on patrol.
> 3. To provide a combat air patrol over the destroyers, and
> 4. To issue orders to the commanders of the combat aircraft and the two

destroyers: (a) to attack any force which attacks them in international waters, and (b) to attack with the objective not only of driving off the force but of destroying it.

THE SECOND INCIDENT

Late the following evening the destroyers, *Maddox* and *C. Turner Joy*, were involved in a second encounter with hostile patrol boats. Like the first incident, this occurred following a South Vietnamese attack on North Vietnamese coastal targets—this time the Rhon River estuary and the Vinh Sonh radar installation, which were bombarded on the night of 3 August. The more controversial of the two, this incident occurred under cover of darkness and seems to have been both triggered and described largely by radar and sonar images. After the action had been joined, however, both visual sightings and intercepted North Vietnamese communications confirmed that an attack by hostile patrol craft was in progress.

At 1940 hours, 4 August 1964 (Tonkin Gulf time), while "proceeding S.E. at best speed," Task Group 72.1 (*Maddox and Turner Joy*) radioed "RCVD INFO indicating attack by PGM P-4 iminent." Evidently this was based on an intercepted communication, later identified as "an intelligence source," indicating that "North Vietnamese naval forces had been ordered to attack the patrol." At the time, radar contacts evaluated as "probable torpedo boats" were observed about 36 miles to the northeast. Accordingly, the Task Group Commander altered course and increased speed to avoid what he evaluated as a trap. At approximately 2035 hours, while west of Hainan Island, the destroyers reported radar sightings of three unidentified aircraft and two unidentified vessels in the patrol area. On receiving the report, *Ticonderoga* immediately launched F-8s and A-4Ds to provide a combat air patrol over the destroyers. Within minutes, the unidentified aircraft disappeared from the radar screen, while the vessels maintained a distance of about 27 miles. Actually, surface contacts on a parallel course had been shadowing the destroyers with radar for more than three hours. ECM contacts maintained by the *C. Turner Joy* indicated that the radar was that carried aboard DRV patrol boats.

New unidentified surface contacts 13 miles distant were reported at 2134 hours. These vessels were closing at approximately 30 knots on the beam and were evaluated as "hostile." Six minutes later (2140) *Maddox* opened fire, and at 1242, by which time two of the new contacts had closed to a distance of 11 miles, aircraft from *Ticonderoga*'s CAP began their attacks. Just before this, one of the PT boats launched a torpedo, which was later reported as seen passing about 300 feet off the port beam, from aft to forward, of the *C. Turner Joy*. A searchlight beam was observed to swing in an arc toward the *C. Turner Joy* by all of the destroyer's signal bridge personnel. It was extinguished before it illuminated the ship, presumably upon detection of the approaching aircraft. Aboard the *Maddox*, Marine gunners saw what were believed to be cockpit lights of one or more small boats pass up the port side of the ship and down the other. After approximately an hour's action, the destroyers reported two enemy boats sunk and no damage or casualties suffered.

In the meantime, two patrol craft from the initial surface contact had closed to join the action, and the engagement was described for higher headquarters—largely on the basis of the destroyers' radar and sonar indications and on radio intercept information. [Three lines illegible.] the count reached 22 torpedoes, a total which caused the Commanding Officer, once the engagement had ended, to question the validity of his report and communicate these doubts to his superiors:

> Review of action makes many recorded contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects and overeager sonarman may have accounted for many reports.

In addition to sonar readings, however, the Task Group had also reported intercepting communications from North Vietnamese naval craft indicating that they were involved in an attack on U.S. ("enemy") ships and that they had "sacrificed" two vessels in the engagement.

THE RESPONSE IN WASHINGTON

Sometime prior to the reported termination of the engagement, at 0030 hours, 5 August (Tonkin Gulf time), "alert orders" to prepare for possible reprisal raids were sent out by naval authorities to *Ticonderoga* and to a second aircraft carrier, *Constellation,* which started heading South from Hong Kong late on 3 August. Such raids were actually ordered and carried out later in the day. "Defense officials disclosed [in public testimony, 9 January 1968] that, when the first word was received of the second attack 'immediate consideration was given to retaliation.' " That apparently began shortly after 0920 hours (Washington time), when the task group message that a North Vietnamese naval attack was imminent was first relayed to Washington. From this time on, amid a sequence of messages describing the attack, Secretary McNamara held "a series of meetings with [his] chief civilian and military advisers" concerning the engagement and possible U.S. retaliatory actions. As he testified before the Fulbright Committee:

> We identified and refined various options for a response to the attack, to be presented to the President. Among these options was the air strike against the attacking boats and their associated bases, which option was eventually selected. As the options were identified preliminary messages were sent to appropriate operational commanders alerting them to the several possibilities so that initial planning steps could be undertaken.

At 1230, the President met with the National Security Council. Having just come from a brief meeting with the JCS, attended also by Secretary Rusk and McGeorge Bundy, Secretary McNamara briefed the NSC on the reported details of the attack and the possibilities for reprisal. Shortly thereafter (presumably during a working lunch with the President, Secretary Rusk and Bundy) and after receiving by telephone the advice of the JCS, McNamara and the others recommended specific reprisal actions. It was at this point that the President approved "a response consisting of an air strike on the PT and SWATOW boat bases and their associated facilities."

Returning from this session shortly after 1500, Secretary McNamara, along with Deputy Secretary Vance, joined with the JCS to review all the evidence relating to the engagement. Included in this review was the communications intelligence information which the Secretary reported, containing North Vietnamese reports that (1) their vessels were engaging the destroyers, and (2) they had lost two craft in the fight. In the meantime, however, messages had been relayed to the Joint Staff indicating considerable confusion over the details of the attack.

The DE SOTO Patrol Commander's message, expressing doubts about earlier evidence of a large-scale torpedo attack, arrived sometime after 1330 hours. Considerably later (it was not sent to CINCPACFLT until 1447 EDT), another message arrived to the effect that while details of the action were still confusing, the commander of Task Group 72.1 was certain that the ambush was genuine. He had interviewed the personnel who sighted the boat's cockpit lights passing near the *Maddox,* and he had obtained a report from the *C. Turner Joy* that two torpedoes were observed passing nearby. Accordingly, these reports were discussed by telephone with CINCPAC, and he was instructed by Secretary McNamara to make a careful check of the evidence and ascertain whether there was any doubt concerning the occurrence of an attack. CINCPAC called the JCS at least twice more, at 1723 and again at 1807 hours, to state that he was convinced on the basis of "additional information" that the attacks had taken place. At the time of the earlier call Secretary McNamara and the JCS were discussing possible force deployments to follow any reprisals. On the occasion of the first call, the Secretary was at the White House attending the day's second NSC meeting. Upon being informed of CINCPAC's call, he reports:

> I spoke to the Director of the Joint Staff and asked him to make certain that the Commander in Chief, Pacific was willing to state that the attack had taken place, and therefore that he was free to release the Executive Order because earlier in the afternoon I had told him that under no circumstances would retaliatory action take place until we were, to use my words, "damned sure that the attacks had taken place."

At the meeting of the National Security Council, proposals to deploy certain increments of OPLAN 37-64 forces to the Western Pacific were discussed, and the order to retaliate against North Vietnamese patrol craft and their associated facilities was confirmed. Following this meeting, at 1845, the President met with 16 Congressional leaders from both parties for a period of 89 minutes. Reportedly, he described the second incident in the Gulf, explained his decisions to order reprisals, and informed the legislators of his intention to request a formal statement of Congressional support for these decisions. On the morning following the meeting, the Washington *Post* carried a report that none of the Congressional leaders present at the meeting had raised objections to the course of action planned. Their only question, the report stated, "had to do with how Congress could show its agreement and concern in the crisis."

In many ways the attacks on U.S. ships in the Tonkin Gulf provided the Administration with an opportunity to do a number of things that had been urged on it. Certainly it offered a politically acceptable way of exerting direct punitive pressure on North Vietnam. In South Vietnam, the U.S. response served to satisfy for a time the growing desire for some action to carry the war to the North. Relative to the election campaign, it provided a means of eliminating any doubts about President Johnson's decisiveness that may have been encouraged by his preferred candidate's image as the restrained man of peace. The obvious convenience and the ways in which it was exploited have been at the root of much of the suspicion with which critics of Administration policy have viewed the incident.

The documents available to this writer are not conclusive on this point, but the evidence indicates that the occurrence of a DRV provocation at this time resulted from events over which the U.S. Government exercised little control. It has been suggested that the incidents were related in some way to pressure coming from the GVN for U.S. action against North Vietnam. However, the patrol was authorized on or prior to 17 July, and General Khanh's oft-cited "Go North" appeal wasn't made until 19 July. The first attack almost certainly was a case of mistaken judgment on the part of the local Vietnamese commander. His probable association of U.S.S. *Maddox* with the South Vietnamese raiding force is indicated by the circumstances preceding the event, the brief duration and character of it, and the long-delayed (not until 5 August) and rather subdued DRV public comment. Moreover, there is little reason to see anything more than coincidence in the close conjunction between the GVN's maritime operations against the North Vietnamese coast and the scheduling of the DE SOTO Patrol. The two operations were scheduled and monitored from different authorities and through separate channels of communication and command. Higher U.S. naval commands were informed of the operations against the two islands by COMUSMACV, but the task group commander had no knowledge of where or when the specific operations had taken place. As Secretary McNamara told Senator Morse, in response to charges that U.S. naval forces were supporting the GVN operation,

> Our ships had absolutely no knowledge of it, were not connected with it; in no sense of the word can be considered to have backstopped the effort.

In addition, there was no reason on the basis of earlier DE SOTO Patrol experience to even suspect that patrol activity might precipitate hostile action by North Vietnam.

Although the events of the second attack were less clear-cut, the evidence does not support beliefs (which have been expressed) that the incident was staged. On the contrary, the evidence leads readily to other explanations, which are at least equally as plausible.

DRV motivations for the second attack are unclear, but several possibilities provide rational explanations for a deliberate DRV decision. Those given credence at the time—that the DRV or China wanted to increase pressures for an international conference *or* that the DRV was testing U.S. reactions to a contemplated general offensive—have lost some credibility. Subsequent events and DRV actions have appeared to lack any consistent relationship with such motives. Perhaps closer to the mark is the narrow purpose of prompt retaliation for an embarrassing and well-publicized rebuff by a much-maligned enemy. Inexperienced in modern naval operations, DRV leaders may have believed that under cover of darkness it would be possible to even the score or to provide at least a psychological victory by severely damaging a U.S. ship. Unlike the first incident, the DRV was ready (5 August) with a propaganda blast denying its own provocation and claiming the destruction of U.S. aircraft. Still, regardless of motive, there is little question but that the attack on the destroyers was deliberate. Having followed the destroyers for hours, their course was well known to the North Vietnamese naval force, and its advance units were laying ahead to make an ambushing beam attack fully 60 miles from shore.

The reality of a North Vietnamese attack on 4 August has been corroborated by both visual and technical evidence. That it may have been deliberately provoked by the United States is belied to a considerable degree by circumstantial evidence. Operating restrictions for the DE SOTO Patrol were made more stringent following the first attack. The 11 n.m., rather than 8 n.m., off-shore patrolling track indicates an intention to avoid—not provoke—further contact. On February the rules of engagement were modified to restrict "hot pursuit" by the U.S. ships to no closer than 11 n.m. from the North Vietnamese coast; aircraft were to pursue no closer than 3 n.m. Given the first attack, the President's augmentation of the patrol force was a normal precaution, particularly since both *Ticonderoga* and *C. Turner Joy* were already deployed in the immediate vicinity as supporting elements. Moreover, since the augmentation was coupled with a clear statement of intent to continue the patrols and a firm warning to the DRV that repetition would bring dire consequences, their addition to the patrol could be expected to serve more as a deterrent than a provocation.

The often alleged "poised" condition of the U.S. reprisal forces was anything but extraordinary. U.S.S. *Constellation* was well out of the immediate operating area as the patrol was resumed on 3 August. In fact, one reason for delaying the launching of retaliatory air strikes (nearly 1100 hours, 5 August—Tonkin Gulf time) was to permit *Constellation* to approach within reasonable range of the targets. Target lists from which to make appropriate selections were already available as a result of routine contingency planning accomplished in June and July. In preparation for the resumed DE SOTO Patrol of 3–5 August, the patrol track was moved farther north to make clearer the separation between it and the 34-A operations. The ways in which the events of the second Tonkin Gulf incident came about give little indication of a deliberate provocation to provide opportunity for reprisals.

BROADENING THE IMPACT

There is no question, however, that the second incident was promptly exploited by the Administration. The event was seized upon as an opportunity to take several measures that had been recommended earlier and which were now seen as useful means of turning an essentially unique and localized incident into an event with broader strategic impact. The extent to which the strategic utility of these actions was perceived during the two days between the incidents is not clear. Certainly the disposition of U.S.S. *Constellation* does not suggest a picture of intensive preparation for a planned series of new military and political pressures against North Vietnam. Moreover, there is no record in the usual sources of the series of staff meetings, task assignments and memoranda that typically accompany preparations for coordinated political and military initiatives. Whatever was contemplated between 2 and 4 August, the deliberations immediately preceding the reprisal decision seem to have been largely *ad hoc,* both within DOD and among the President's principal advisers.

The most reasonable explanation for the actions which accompanied the reprisals, and for the rapidity of their implementation, is the fact that each of them had been proposed and staffed in detail months before. These "on the shelf" options had been recommended unanimously by the principal officials responsible for security matters in Southeast Asia. The fact that they were implemented in August indicates that the President did not disapprove of them, but rather that the domestic and international political environments had probably been judged inappropriate earlier in the summer. The measures apparently had been considered either too costly or too risky (perhaps politically or perhaps in terms of communist reactions), given the President's election strategy and his policy theme of "maximum effect with minimum escalation." The kind of circumstances created by the Tonkin Gulf affair enabled them to be carried out at lower cost and with less risk. The promptness with which these actions were to be taken now is perhaps as much a direct result of the President's well-known political astuteness and keen sense of timing as any other single factor.

One of the first actions taken was to deploy additional U.S. military forces to the Western Pacific. This was done in part as a measure to deter any hostile responses by Hanoi or Peking to the reprisal raids. It also enabled making a stronger signal of U.S. resolve to defend its interests throughout Southeast Asia, as recommended at the end of May. Orders directing the deployment of selected 37–64 forces and the alerting of others were dispatched from the Pentagon shortly after the President's meeting with Congressional leaders on the evening of 4 August. Shortly after midnight, on 5 August, and again later in the day, Secretary McNamara announced the specific measures by which U.S. military capabilities around Southeast Asia were being augmented:

> First, an attack carrier group has been transferred from the First Fleet on the Pacific coast to the Western Pacific. Secondly, interceptor and fighter bomber aircraft have been moved into South Vietnam. Thirdly, fighter bomber aircraft have been moved into Thailand. Fourthly, interceptor and fighter bomber squadrons have been transferred from the United States into advance bases in the Pacific. Fifthly, an antisubmarine task force group has been moved into the South China Sea.

It is significant, relative to the broader purpose of the deployments, that few of these additional units were removed from the Western Pacific when the immediate crisis subsided. In late September the fourth attack aircraft carrier was authorized to resume its normal station in the Eastern Pacific as soon as the regularly assigned carrier completed repairs. The other forces remained in the vicinity of their August deployment.

Other actions taken by the Administration in the wake of Tonkin Gulf were intended to communicate to various audiences the depth and sincerity of the U.S. commitment. On the evening of 4 August, in conjunction with his testing of Congressional opinion regarding reprisal action, President Johnson disclosed his intention to request a resolution in support of U.S. Southeast Asian policy. This he did through a formal message to both houses on 5 August. Concurrently, identical draft resolutions, the language of which had been prepared by executive agencies, were introduced in the Senate by J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) and in the House by Thomas E. Morgan (D., Pa.) and co-sponsored by bi-partisan leadership. Discussed in committee on 6 August, in response to testimony by leading Administration officials, the resolution was passed the following day—by votes of 88 to 2 in the Senate and 416 to 0 in the House.

Despite the nearly unanimous votes of support for the Resolution, Congressional opinions varied as to the policy implications and the meaning of such support. The central belief seemed to be that the occasion necessitated demonstrating the nation's unity and collective will in support of the President's action and affirming U.S. determination to oppose further aggression. However, beyond that theme, there was a considerable variety of opinion. For example, in the House, expressions of support varied from Congressman Laird's argument, that while the retaliation in the Gulf was appropriate such actions still left a policy to be developed with respect to the land war in Southeast Asia, to the more reticent viewpoint of Congressman Alger. The latter characterized his support as being primarily for purposes of showing unity and expressed concern over the danger of being dragged into war by "other nations seeking our help." Several spokesmen stressed that the Resolution did not constitute a declaration of war, did not abdicate Congressional responsibility for determining national policy commitments, and did not give the President carte blanche to involve the nation in a major Asian war.

Similar expressions were voiced in the senior chamber. For example, Senator Nelson sought assurances that the Resolution would not be exploited to commit the United States further in the direction of a large land war in Asia without an expression of specific Congressional approval. In response, Senator Fulbright stated that he did not believe that the Resolution changed in any way the Administration's concept of keeping the conflict in Vietnam as limited as possible. He identified the purposes of the Resolution as being only (1) "to make it clear that the Congress approves the action taken by the President to meet the attack on U.S. forces . . ." and (2) to declare support for the resolute policy enunciated by the President in order to prevent further aggression, or to retaliate with suitable measures should such aggression take place." However, in subsequent discussion it was made clear that preventing or retaliating against further aggression was interpreted rather broadly at the time:

> (Mr. Cooper) . . . are we now giving the President advance authority to take whatever action he may deem necessary respecting South Vietnam and its defense, or with respect to the defense of any other country included in the [SEATO] treaty?
>
> (Mr. Fulbright) I think that is correct.
>
> (Mr. Cooper) Then, looking ahead, if the President decided that it was necessary to use such force as could lead into war, we will give that authority by this resolution?
>
> (Mr. Fulbright) That is the way I would interpret it. If a situation later developed in which we thought the approval should be withdrawn it could be withdrawn by concurrent resolution.

The Congressional Resolution had several intended audiences. First, it was aimed at the communist powers who might not believe the President would risk legislative debate over strong military actions in an election year. Second, it was intended to reassure our allies, particularly in Asia, who might doubt the ability of the President to rally the necessary public resolve should stronger military measures be needed. Finally it was directed at the U.S. public, whose appreciation of national interests in Southeast Asia might be strengthened through observation of combined executive-legislative and bipartisan political support.

The United Nations was the target of a separate statement, on 5 August, as Ambassador Stevenson described the events in the Gulf for members of the Security Council and specifically related the DRV provocation to the wider campaign of terror and infiltration occurring in South Vietnam and Laos. This address was designed to establish the legitimacy of our actions in the Gulf under provisions of the UN Charter and to reaffirm that U.S. policy in Southeast Asia had limited aims and was based on upholding provisions of existing international agreements.

The third communication was directed specifically to Hanoi, on 10 August, through the Canadian I.C.C. representative and was intended to strengthen the warning which he conveyed on his initial visit. In addition to repeating points made earlier, Seaborn's second message conveyed the U.S. Government's uncertainty over DRV intentions in the 4 August attack and explained that subsequent U.S. deployments of additional airpower to South Vietnam and Thailand were "precautionary." In addition, the new message stressed: (1) that the Tonkin

Gulf events demonstrated that "U.S. public and official patience" was wearing thin; (2) that the Congressional Resolution reaffirmed U.S. determination "to continue to oppose firmly, by all necessary means, DRV efforts to subvert and conquer South Vietnam and Laos"; and (3) that "if the DRV persists in its present course, it can expect to suffer the consequences."

Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the provocation handed the U.S. Government in the Tonkin Gulf, the Administration was able to carry out most of the actions recommended by its principal officials early in the summer. By the same token, it was reducing the number of unused measures short of direct military action that had been conceived as available for exerting effective pressure on the DRV. In effect, as it made its commitments in Southeast Asia clearer it also deepened them, and in the process it denied itself access to some of the uncommitting options which it had perceived earlier as offering policy flexibility. Meanwhile, other events were also having the effect of denying options which had been considered useful alternatives to strikes against the North.

III. POST-TONKIN POLICY ASSESSMENTS

The Tonkin Gulf incidents were important not only because of what they enabled the United States to do in response—but also because of the way what was done began to be regarded by policymakers. The fact that U.S. forces had responded to hostile acts by making direct attacks on North Vietnam, albeit limited ones under unique circumstances, had rather significant impacts on the Administration's policy judgments. These impacts appeared as it became increasingly evident that the United States actually had fewer options than it once believed available.

DILEMMAS IN LAOS

One of the areas where the Administration first saw its freedom of action being impaired was Laos.

Prior to the events in Tonkin Gulf, the situation in Laos had become increasingly complex, thus making U.S. policy choices increasingly delicate. Since the end of May, U.S. hopes for a stabilized Laos had been based largely on a Polish proposal to convene a preliminary conference among six nations. Particularly promising was the Soviet Union's willingness to support the proposal. Toward the end of June, as the Laotian government warned of the imminent threat of a major communist offensive near Muong Soui, the Soviet Union asked Great Britain to postpone efforts toward such a conference, and the Poles seemed to back away from their original initiative. On 25 July the Soviet Union announced her return to the 14-Nation formula, and threatened to resign her co-chairman role if a conference were not called. The Soviet threat to withdraw from the international machinery that is basic to the neutralist Laotian government's claim to legitimacy was a matter of considerable mutual concern in Vientiane and Washington.

One of the major reasons for U.S. support of the Polish 6-Nation preliminary conference was its value in forestalling pressure for a Geneva-type meeting. It was hoped that such a conference could be prolonged well into the autumn to give the political and military situation in South Vietnam time to be improved, and to build a more favorable political climate for an eventual 14-Nation conference on Laos. The latter could be accomplished, it was hoped, by: (1) demonstrating the extent of communist responsibility for Laotian instability; (2) getting the I.C.C. to function more effectively; (3) strengthening international backing for Souvanna's position; and (4) thereby obtaining support for his insistence on Pathet Lao withdrawal from the Plaine des Jarres as a precondition for a new Geneva settlement. Insofar as Laos was concerned, the United States recognized that a new conference was probably desirable, as long as it did not occur too soon. However, it also recognized the suspicion with which the GVN would regard any kind of negotiations over Southeast Asia and the likelihood that back-corridor discussions of the Vietnamese problem would be an almost inevitable by-product. In time such a procedure might be useful, but for the balance of 1964 it was to be avoided in order to promote GVN stability and encourage a more vigorous GVN war effort.

The pressure for a Geneva-type conference had been building ever since the resumption of fighting in Laos in May. The chief protagonist in the quest for negotiations was France, who first proposed reconvening the 14-Nation Conference to deal with the crisis on 20 May. What made French policy so dangerous to U.S. interests, however, was that its interest in a Geneva solution applied to Vietnam as well. On 12 June, De Gaulle publicly repeated his neutralization theme for all Indo-China and called for an end to all foreign intervention there; on 23 July he proposed reconvening the 1954 Geneva Conference to deal with the problems of Vietnam.

The Soviet Union's return to the 14-Nation formula in July (it had endorsed the original French proposal before indicating willingness to support the 6-Nation approach) indicated solidarity in the communist camp. The call was endorsed by North Vietnam on the following day. Communist China first announced support for a 14-Nation Conference (on Laos) on 9 June, repeating this through notes to the co-chairman calling on the 13th for an "emergency meeting." On 2 August, the Chinese urged the USSR not to carry out its threat to abandon its co-chairman role, apparently viewing such a development as jeopardizing the possibilities for a Geneva settlement.

Great Britain also urged the Russians to stay on, and during the last days of July it attempted to make arrangements in Moscow to convene a 14-Nation assembly on Laos. The negotiations failed because Britain insisted on Souvanna's prerequisite that the communists withdraw from positions taken in May and was unable to gain Soviet acquiescence. However, U.S. leaders were aware that Britain's support on this point could not be counted on indefinitely in the face of increasing pressure in the direction of Geneva.

In the meantime, however, Laotian military efforts to counter the communist threat to key routes and control points west of the Plaine des Jarres were showing great success. As a result of a counteroffensive (Operation Triangle), government forces gained control of a considerable amount of territory that gave promise of assuring access between the two capitals (Vientiane and Luang Prabang) for the first time in three years.

In effect, the government's newly won control of territory and communication routes in Central Laos created a new and more favorable balance of power in that country, which in the perceptions of the Administration should not be jeopardized. A threat to this balance from either (1) communist reactions to additional pressure, or (2) Laotian insistence on extending their offensive into the Plaine des Jarres, was cited to discourage proposals near the end of July to permit the VNAF to bomb infiltration routes in the Laotian Panhandle. This "don't rock the boat" policy was given added encouragement when, on 1 August, Great Britain initiated a promising effort toward a new diplomatic solution. Acting on Souvanna Phouma's request, the British government urged the I.C.C. members to arrange a meeting among the three Laotian political factions.

Concern over not provoking a communist military escalation that would upset the relatively stabilized situation in Laos figured prominently in a tentative analysis of U.S. strategy for Southeast Asia made and circulated for comment by the State Department in mid-August. It had a significant impact on the Administration's assessment of its options in the post-Tonkin period. Among other effects, this concern caused it to withhold for several weeks its approval of continuing proposals for air and ground initiatives in the Panhandle as means to improve the situation in South Vietnam.

CONCERN OVER PRESSURES FOR NEGOTIATIONS

One of the Tonkin Gulf impacts which was perceived within the Administration served to exacerbate its policy dilemmas regarding Laos. Administration officials were apprehensive that the international crisis precipitated by incidents in the Gulf might intensify the kind of Geneva conference pressures generated previously. Administration concern was apparently well founded. On 5 August UN Secretary General U Thant stated that the 14-Nation assembly should be reconvened to deal with the Tonkin Gulf debate then being urged on the UN Security Council. (He had earlier urged reconvening the 1954 Conference to negotiate a Vietnam settlement.) Two days later, during the debate, the French delegation urged the calling of a conference for the pacification of all of Indo-China. Reports appeared on 10 August that the Chinese *People's Daily* published an editorial arguing that a Geneva settlement was the only effective way to solve the problem of South Vietnam. On the 19th, in a note rejecting potential UN Security Council findings regarding responsibility for the Tonkin Gulf incidents, North Vietnam declared its insistence on a Geneva conference.

Such was the Administration's concern in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, that it contemplated a diplomatic initiative relating to Laos that was designed to counteract the expected pressure. Reflecting a point of view reportedly also becoming attractive to Souvanna Phouma, the State Department sought reactions to a policy direction that would no longer insist on Pathet Lao withdrawal from the Plaine des Jarres as a precondition to an international conference. The gains recently achieved through "Operation Triangle" were so significant, it reasoned, that they more than offset communist control of the Plaine. And it was clear that any negotiations by which a communist withdrawal might be arranged would include reciprocal demands for the government to relinquish its recently won gains. Moreover, passage of the Congressional Resolution and the strong DRV naval attacks had accomplished the exact kind of actions believed to be necessary earlier to demonstrate U.S. firmness in the event negotiating pressure should become compelling.

Reactions to this tentative policy change were unfavorable. It was seen as likely to have a demoralizing impact on the GVN. It was also seen as possibly eroding the impression of strong U.S. resolve, which the reprisal air strikes were believed to have created. For example, Ambassador Taylor cabled:

> . . . rush to conference table would serve to confirm to CHICOMS that U.S. retaliation for destroyer attacks was transient phenomenon and that

> firm CHICOM response in form of commitment to defend NVN has given U.S. "Paper tiger" second thoughts. . . .
>
> In Vietnam sudden backdown from previously strongly held U.S. position on [Plaine des Jarres] withdrawal prior to conference on Laos would have potentially disastrous effect. Morale and will to fight and particular willingness to push ahead with arduous pacification task . . . would be undermined by what would look like evidence that U.S. seeking to take advantage of any slight improvement in non-Communist position as excuse for extricating itself from Indo-China via [conference] route. . . .
>
> Under circumstances, we see very little hope that results of such a conference would be advantageous to us. Moreover, prospects of limiting it to consideration of only Laotian problem appear at this time juncture to be dimmer than ever. . . .

CONCERN OVER TONKIN REPRISAL SIGNALS

Contained in Ambassador Taylor's views was yet another of the Administration's reflections on the impact of the Tonkin Gulf incidents. Officials developed mixed feelings regarding the effect of the Tonkin reprisals for signaling firm U.S. commitments in Southeast Asia. On one hand, it was conceded that the reprisals and the actions which accompanied them represented the most forceful expression of U.S. resolve to date. Improvements were perceived in South Vietnamese morale, and the combination of force and restraint demonstrated was believed effective in interrupting communist momentum and forcing a reassessment of U.S. intentions. On the other hand, they reflected concern that these effects might not last and that the larger aspects of U.S. determination might still be unclear.

Several officials and agencies indicated that our actions in the Tonkin Gulf represented only one step along a continually demanding route for the United States. They expressed relief that if a persuasive impression of firmness were to be created relative to the general security of Southeast Asia, we could not rest on our laurels. Ambassador Taylor expressed the limited impact of the Tonkin Gulf action as follows:

> It should be remembered that our retaliatory action in Gulf of Tonkin is in effect an isolated U.S.-DRV incident. Although this has relation . . . to [the] larger problem of DRV aggression by subversion in Viet-Nam and Laos, we have not (repeat not) yet come to grips in a forceful way with DRV over the issue of this larger and much more complex problem.

Later, he described a need for subsequent actions that would convey to Hanoi that "the operational rules with respect to the DRV are changing." Assistant Secretary of State Bundy believed that Hanoi and Peking had probably been convinced only "that we will act strongly where U.S. force units are directly involved . . . [that] in other respects the communist side may not be so persuaded that we are prepared to take stronger action. . . ." He saw the need for a continuous "combination of military pressure and some form of communication" to cause Hanoi to accept the idea of "getting out" of South Vietnam and Laos. CINCPAC stated that "what we have not done and must do is make plain to Hanoi and Peiping the cost of pursuing their current objectives and impeding ours. . . . Our actions of August 5 have created a momentum which can lead to the attainment of our objectives in S.E. Asia. . . . It is most important that we not lose this momentum." The JCS urged actions to "sustain the U.S. advantage [recently] gained," and later cautioned: "Failure to resume and maintain a program of pressure through military actions . . . could signal a lack of resolve."

What these advisors had in mind by way of actions varied somewhat but only in the extent to which they were willing to go in the immediate future. Bundy stressed that policy commitments must be such that U.S. and GVN hands could be kept free for military actions against DRV infiltration routes in Laos. Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC and the JCS urged prompt air and ground operations across the Laotian border to interrupt the current (though modest) southward flow of men and supplies. Both Taylor and CINCPAC indicated the necessity of building up our "readiness posture" to undertake stronger actions—through additional deployments of forces and logistical support elements and strengthening of the GVN political base.

The mood and attitudes reflected in these viewpoints were concrete and dramatic expressions of the increased U.S. commitment stemming from the Tonkin Gulf incidents. They were candidly summed up by CINCPAC in his statement:

> . . . pressures against the other side once instituted should not be relaxed by any actions or lack of them which would destroy the benefits of the rewarding steps previously taken. . . .

Increasingly voiced by officials from many quarters of the Administration and from the professional agencies were arguments which said, in effect, now that we have gone this far we cannot afford to stop and go no farther; our original signal must continually be reinforced. What was not stated—at least not in documentary form—were estimates of how long the process might have to continue or to what extent the actions might have to be carried.

REASSERTION OF THE ROSTOW THESIS

Soon after the Tonkin Gulf incidents State Department Counselor Walt Rostow reformulated and circulated his earlier thesis that insurgencies supported by external powers must be dealt with through measures to neutralize the sources of that support. First presented to President Johnson in December 1963, variations on this theme had been proposed by Rostow at various times throughout 1964, the most recent occasion being in June, right after the Honolulu Conference. Now in mid-August, his newly articulated arguments were passed to the White House, Department of State, Department of Defense and the JCS.

The "Rostow thesis" was generalized—not explicitly dealing with a particular insurgency—but it was evident that considerations of the U.S. dilemmas in Southeast Asia affected its formulation. It started with a proposition:

> By applying limited, graduated military actions reinforced by political and economic pressures on a nation providing external support for insurgency, we should be able to cause that nation to decide to reduce greatly or eliminate altogether support for the insurgency. The objective of these pressures is not necessarily to attack his ability to provide support, although economic and certain military actions would in fact do just that. Rather, the objective

> is to affect his calculation of interests. Therefore, the threat that is implicit in initial U.S. actions would be more important than the military effect of the actions themselves.

In Rostow's view, the target government's "calculation of interests" could be affected by a number of factors, none of which would preclude, however, the need for effective counterinsurgency programs within the country already under attack. The factors included: (1) loss, and fear of further loss, of military and economic facilities; (2) fear of involvement in a much larger conflict; (3) fear of increased dependence upon, and loss of independent action to, a major communist country; and (4) fear of internal political upheaval and loss of power. The coercive impacts of the pressures were to be their principal objectives. Significant (in view of currently espoused rationale for increased pressures on North Vietnam) was the explicit caution that improved morale in the country troubled by insurgency and "improved U.S. bargaining leverage in any international conference on the conflict" were to be considered merely as "bonus effects."

The coercive pressure was to result from "damaging military actions" coupled with concurrent political, economic and psychological pressures. The former could include selective or full naval blockade and "surgical" destruction of specific targets by aerial bombardment or naval gunfire. They could be supported by such nondestructive military actions as aerial reconnaissance, harassment of civil aviation and maritime commerce, mock air attacks, and timely concentrations of U.S. or allied forces at sea or near land borders. Following a line of reasoning prevalent in the Government during the early 60s, Rostow observed that a target government might well reduce its insurgency supporting role in the face of such pressures because of the communists' proverbial "tactical flexibility."

The thesis was subjected to a rather thorough analysis in OSD/ISA and coordinated with the Department of State. The nature of this review will be discussed on later pages and in a different context.

ACCOMPANYING PAUSE IN PRESSURES

The foregoing policy assessments were conducted in an atmosphere relatively free of even those pressure measures that preceded the Tonkin Gulf crisis. Since the force deployments of 6 August, little military activity had been directed at the DRV. U-2 flights over North Vietnam and reconnaissance of the Laotian Panhandle were continued. Military operations within Laos were limited to the consolidation of gains achieved in Operation Triangle. A deliberate stand-down was adopted for all other activities—including DE SOTO Patrols and the GVN's covert harassing operations. The purpose of this "holding phase," as it was called, was to "avoid actions that would in any way take the onus off the Communist side for [the Tonkin] escalation."

However, during the "holding phase" some of the administrative impediments to wider military action were cleared away. One measure that was taken was to relax the operating restrictions and the rules of engagement for U.S. forces in Southeast Asia. This was accomplished in response to JCS urging that attacking forces not be permitted sanctuaries from which to regroup and perhaps repeat their hostile acts. Prior rules had not permitted pursuit of hostile aircraft outside South Vietnam or authorized intercept of intruders over Thailand. Under the revised rules of 15 August 1964, U.S. forces were authorized to attack and destroy any vessel or aircraft "which attacks, or gives positive indication of intent to attack" U.S. forces operating in or over international waters and in Laos, to include hot pursuit into the territorial waters or air space of North Vietnam and into the air space over other countries of Southeast Asia. "Hostile aircraft over South Vietnam and Thailand" could be engaged as well and pursued into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Another prerequisite to wider military action that was accomplished was the combined GVN-U.S. planning for cross-border ground operations. By 16 August, this had proceeded to such an extent that COMUSMACV believed it necessary to seek approval of the concept and appropriate to urge that Phase I of the program get underway. Significant for understanding the pressure for wider actions increasingly being brought to bear on the Administration was the fact that MACV made the request despite explicit comment that the concept was "an overly ambitious scheme." Presumably, he considered it likely to be ineffective militarily, but perhaps important in stimulating more vigorous GVN efforts. Whatever his particular reasons at the time, MACV repeated the recommendations later in the month as part of several measures to be taken inside and outside South Vietnam. These were designed "to give the VC a bloody nose," to steady the newly reformed South Vietnamese government, and to raise the morale of the population. However, the earlier MACV cable had already acknowledged what must have been one of the Administration's key inhibitions against undertaking cross-border actions: General Westmoreland stated, "It should be recognized that once this operation is initiated by the GVN, U.S. controls may be marginal."

The period of the "holding phase" was also a period of significant developments within South Vietnam. Ambassador Taylor's initial report (10 August) made clear that the political situation was already precarious, giving Khanh only a 50-50 chance of staying in power and characterizing the GVN as ineffective and fraught with conflicting purposes. In Taylor's view, the leadership in Saigon showed symptoms of "defeatism" and a hesitancy to prosecute the pacification campaign within South Vietnam. Meanwhile, however, its popular support in the countryside seemed to be directly proportional to the degree of protection which the government provided. In view of this shaky political base, General Khanh seized upon the occasion of post-Tonkin euphoria—apparently with Ambassador Taylor's encouragement—to acquire additional executive authority. On 7 August, announcing the necessity for certain "emergency" powers to cope with any heightened VC activity, he proclaimed himself President and promulgated the Vung Tau Charter. This action, which gave him virtually dictatorial power over several aspects of South Vietnamese life, met with hostile reactions. In late August, Khanh's authority was challenged in the streets of Saigon, Hue and Da Nang, during several days of student protest demonstrations and clashes between Buddhist and Catholic groups. In response to student and Buddhist pressures primarily, he resigned his recently assumed post as President and promised that a national assemblage would be called to form a more popularly based government. On 3 September, Khanh returned to assume the premiership, but clearly with weaker and more conditional authority than before the government crisis.

Meanwhile, as the GVN's lack of cohesion and stability was being demonstrated, the infiltration of communist forces into South Vietnam may have been on the increase. At least, belief in an increase in the rate of this infiltration apparently gained currency in various U.S. agencies at this time. The documents available to this writer from the period neither refute nor substantiate the increase, but several of them contained references to this perception. For example, a State Department memorandum, dated 24 August, acknowledged a "rise and change in the nature of infiltration in recent months." Later analyses confirmed that increases had taken place, but the precise period when they began was not identified. Hence, unless there were other intelligence data to confirm them, any implications regarding North Vietnamese policy decisions were largely speculative.

Possibly influencing the judgments of August was the fact that increased communist movement of men and supplies to the South was expected, resulting in part from a DIA assessment (7 August) of the most likely DRV reactions to the Tonkin reprisals. Moreover, the State Department's analysis of next courses of action in Southeast Asia had made "clear evidence of greatly increased infiltration from the North" an explicit condition for any policy judgment that "systematic military action against DRV" was required during the balance of 1964. And leading officials from several agencies were beginning to feel that such action might be inevitable.

The combined effects of the signs of increased VC infiltration and of continuing upheaval in Saigon caused great concern in Washington. The central perception was one of impending chaos and possible failure in South Vietnam. Among several agencies, the emerging mood was that some kind of action was urgently needed—even if it had the effect merely of improving the U.S. image prior to pulling out. It was this mood that prevailed as the period of "pause" drew to a close.

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

25 May 1964

Whereas the signatories of the Geneva Accords of 1954, including the Soviet Union, the Communist regime in China, and Viet Nam agreed to respect the independence and territorial integrity of South Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia; and the United States, although not a signatory of the Accords, declared that it would view any renewal of aggression in violation of the Accords with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security;

Whereas the Communist regime in North Viet Nam, with the aid and support of the Communist regime in China, has systematically flouted its obligations under these Accords and has engaged in aggression against the independence and territorial integrity of South Viet Nam by carrying out a systematic plan for the subversion of the Government of South Viet Nam, by furnishing direction, training, personnel and arms for the conduct of guerrilla warfare within South Viet Nam, and by the ruthless use of terror against the peaceful population of that country;

Whereas in the face of this Communist aggression and subversion the Government and people of South Viet Nam have bravely undertaken the defense of their independence and territorial integrity, and at the request of that Government the United States has, in accordance with its Declaration of 1954, provided military advice, economic aid and military equipment;

Whereas in the Geneva Agreements of 1962 the United States, the Soviet Union, the Communist regime in China, North Viet Nam and others solemnly undertook to respect the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, unity and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Laos;

Whereas in violation of these undertakings the Communist regime in North Viet Nam, with the aid and support of the Communist regime in China, has engaged in aggression against the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Laos by maintaining forces on Laotian territory, by the use of that territory for the infiltration of arms and equipment into South Viet Nam, and by providing direction, men and equipment for persistent armed attacks against the Government of National Unification of the Kingdom of Laos;

Whereas in the face of this Communist aggression the Government of National Unification and the non-Communist elements in Laos have striven to maintain the conditions of unity, independence and neutrality envisioned for their country in the Geneva Agreements of 1962;

Whereas the United States has no territorial, military or political ambitions in Southeast Asia, but desires only that the peoples of South Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia should be left in peace by their neighbors to work out their own destinies in their own way, and, therefore, its objective is that the status established for these countries in the Geneva Accords of 1954 and the Geneva Agreements of 1962 should be restored with effective means of enforcement;

Whereas it is essential that the world fully understand that the American people are united in their determination to take all steps that may be necessary to assist the peoples of South Viet Nam and Laos to maintain their independence and political integrity.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

That the United States regards the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of South Viet Nam and Laos as vital to its national interest and to world peace;

Sec. 2. To this end, if the President determines the necessity thereof, the United States is prepared, upon the request of the Government of South Viet Nam or the Government of Laos, to use all measures, including the commitment of armed forces to assist that government in the defense of its independence and territorial integrity against aggression or subversion supported, controlled or directed from any Communist country.

Sec. 3. (a) The President is hereby authorized to use for assistance under this joint resolution not to exceed $_______ during the fiscal year 1964, and not to exceed $_______ during the fiscal year 1965, from any appropriations made available for carrying out the provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, in accordance with the provisions of that Act, except as otherwise provided in this joint resolution. This authorization is in addition to other existing authorizations with respect to the use of such appropriations.

(b) Obligations incurred in carrying out the provisions of this joint resolution may be paid either out of appropriations for military assistance or appropriations for other than military assistance, except that appropriations made available for Titles I, III, and VI of Chapter 2, Part I, of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, shall not be available for payment of such obligations.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, when the President determines it to be important to the security of the United States and in furtherance of the purposes of this joint resolution, he may authorize the use of up to $_______ of funds available under subsection (a) in each of the fiscal years 1964 and 1965 under the authority of section 614(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and is authorized to use up to $_______ of such funds in each such year pursuant to his certification that it is inadvisable to specify the nature of the use of such funds, which certification shall be deemed to be a sufficient voucher for such amounts.

(d) Upon determination by the head of any agency making personnel available under authority of section 627 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, or otherwise under that Act, for purposes of assistance under this joint resolution, any officer or employee so made available may be provided compensation and allowances at rates other than those provided by the Foreign Service Act of 1946, as amended, the Career Compensation Act of 1949, as amended, and the Overseas Differentials and Allowances Act to the extent necessary to carry out the purposes of this joint resolution. The President shall prescribe regulations under which such rates of compensation and allowances may be provided. In addition, the President may utilize such provisions of the Foreign Service Act of 1946, as amended, as he deems appropriate to apply to personnel of any agency carrying out functions under this joint resolution.

SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOLUTION

Text of Public Law 88-408 [H.J. Res. 1145], 78 Stat. 384, approved Aug. 10, 1964.

Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace; and

Whereas these attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom; and

Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress approve and support the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

Sec. 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.

Appendix

Indices and Glossary for
The Senator Gravel Edition, Volumes I–IV

Name Index 3

Subject Index 21

Glossary 67

Name Index

The Index has two parts: names which appear in volumes I–IV are indexed on pp. 3–20, and subjects discussed in the four volumes are indexed on pp. 21–66. Cross references are made between the two parts as well as within each part. The volume numbers are indicated by arabic numerals 1, 2, 3, and 4 followed by a period; page references follow the period: e.g., 1.88–90.

Abrams, Gen. Creighton W.: 4.269, 4.456; as Deputy COMUSMACV, 2.509; and LBJ, 4.593; and reorganization of Saigon Mission, 2.619

Acheson, Dean (Sec. of State): 1.30, 2.124, 4.267; advice to LBJ, 4.591; on aid to Indochina, 1.6–7, 1.41–42; and Griffin mission, 1.372; on Ho Chi Minh, 1.51; and Indochina policy, 1.370, 1.371, 1.381, 1.383; letter to R. A. Griffin, 1.372; memo on Viet Minh War, 1.29–30; public statements of, 1.6, 1.382–383; talks with Eden, 1.390–391; on Vietnamese independence, 1.41

Adams, Sherman: 1.101

Aldrich, Winthrop (Amb.): and Dulles cables, 1.477, 1.547

Allen, Maj. Fred: 1.577

Allen, George: 2.504

Alsop, Joseph: 1.579, 2.559, 2.76

Anderson, Adm. Robert: 1.89

Anderson, Robert (Sec. of Treasury): 2.635

Appel, R. W.: 4.455

Apple, Johnny: 4.527

Arellano, Oscar: 1.575, 1.576, 2.648

Auriol, Vincent (French Pres.): 1.58, 1.96

Ayub Khan: 2.56

Bain, Lt. Edward: 1.577

Baldwin, Hanson W.: 4.324

Ball, George W. (Under Sec. of State): 2.2, 2.4, 2.9, 2.46, 2.149, 4.22; advice to LBJ, 4.591; bombing and, 4.52; on Buddhist crisis, 2.234; cable to Lodge, 2.749; Chinese intervention and, 4.51; and Diem coup, 2.238; June 1965 memo, 4.609-610; on limited war with USSR, 4.51; memo to Bundy, 4.609–610; memo for the President, 4.615–619; on military defeat, 4.22; opposition to troop build-up, 3.472; pacification and, 2.590; position on Thailand, 4.614; public statements of, 3.737; and reeducation task, 4.609–610; Vietnam policy of, 2.43, 2.727, 3.238, 4.82, 4.84

Bao Dai (Emperor): 1.11, 1.25, 1.58, 1.59, 1.395, 1.497; abdication of, 1.16; as alternative to Diem, 1.233; and Geneva Conference, 1.561, 1.570; on Ho Chi Minh, 1.50; on partition, 1.135; support for, 1.40, 1.367; U.S. recognition for, 1.6, 1.41; on VNA, 1.71. *See also* Bao Dai solution

Barnett: 4.682

Bay Vien. *See* Vien, Le Van (Bay)

Beach, Gen.: 4.406-407

Bell, David: 2.235, 2.275, 2.543; at Honolulu Conference, 2.550; and Warrenton Conference, 2.539

Berry, Lt. Col. Sidney B.: 3.70

Bidault, Georges: 1.15, 1.56, 1.64, 1.80, 1.104, 1.116; at Geneva Conference, 1.133, 1.479; on U.S. intervention in Indochina, 1.129–130, 1.462

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Bien, Gen. Cao Van: 4.527
Bigart, Homer: 1.581, 2.457
Big Minh. *See* Minh, Gen. Duong Van
Bissell, Richard: 2.38
Black, Col. E. F.: 2.8, 2.40
Black, Eugene: 3.273, 3.355
Blum, Leon: 1.22, 1.23
Blum, Robert: 1.73–74, 1.78, 1.371
Bohanan, Maj. Charles T. R.: 1.576, 2.528
Bonestee, Gen. C. H., III: 1.446, 1.506
Bonnet, Henri: 1.15, 1.98, 1.539
Bonsal, Philip: 1.160
Bougenot, André: 1.104
Boun Oum: 3.197
Bowles, Chester: 2.31
Bradley, Gen. Omar N.: advice to LBJ, 4.591; strategic assessment of SE Asia, 1.363–366
Brebisson, Col.: 1.549
Brent: 2.246, 2.250, 2.317
Brink, Brig. Gen. Francis G.: 1.197
Brinkley, David: 2.828
Brooke, Sen. Edward: 4.498
Brown, Dr. Harold: 4.314, 4.447
Brown, Gen. Harold (Sec. of Air Force): 4.187, 4.193–195, 4.260–262
Bruce, David (Amb.): 1.370
Bullitt, William C.: 1.62
Bundy, McGeorge: 4.159, 4.267; advice to LBJ, 4.591; assessment of situation in SVN, 2.727, 3.294, 3.309–311, 3.346, 3.347; August Plot and, 2.741; on bombing, 3.35, 3.93, 3.271, 4.157–158, 4.278; cables to Lodge, 2.782–783, 2.788; on Diem coup, 2.259; on intervention in NVN, 2.319, 2.339; on leverage, 2.287; memos for President, 2.41, 2.353, 3.431–432; memo to Manning, 3.559–560; NODIS message to Taylor, 2.275; NSAM of, 2.49, 2.642, 2.673, 2.681, 2.770–771, 3.565–566; on nuclear weapons; 3.238; pacification program and, 3.310–311, 4.312; sustained reprisal policy of, 3.308, 3.687–691; recommendations of, 2.689, 3.361; talks with GVN, 3.361; on troop deployment, 4.158–159; Vietnam trip of, 2.562, 3.294; and Warrenton Conference, 2.539
Bundy, William P. (Asst. Sec. of State): 2.37, 2.74, 4.19, 4.242, 4.267, 4.269; advice to LBJ, 4.592; assessment of situation in SVN, 3.293, 3.725; on bombing, 2.339, 4.33, 4.38, 4.67, 4.97–98, 4.144, 4.155–156, 4.165–168; Bundy Working Group, 3.598–601; (*see also* Bundy Working Group) China policy of, 4.245–246; "Courses of Action for SVN," 3.621, 3.656–666; on GVN stability, 4.504–505; "Holding on in SVN," 4.610–615; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; on McNaughton DPM, 4.502–505; memo to Lodge, 2.792; memos to McNamara, 2.13, 2.79, 2.126; memo to Rusk, 4.97–98; messages to Manila Pact nations, 4.523–524; "A Middle Way Course of Action in South Vietnam," 3.480; on mining NVN waters, 4.147–148; and national security action paper, 3.245; on negotiated settlement, 4.253; on options in SVN, 3.604, 3.610, 4.553, 4.259–260; on political factors in Vietnam, 4.445–446; position papers of, 3.593, 3.606, 3.648, 3.676, 3.678–685; public statements of, 3.723, 4.663–664, 4.668–669, 4.671–678; recommendations of, 3.691, 4.23; strategy analysis by, 3.197, 3.296–297, 3.727, 4.444–447; support for stronger military actions, 3.265–266; SVN political crisis and, 4.82, 4.87–89; on Tet truce, 4.141–142; on Tonkin Gulf Crisis, 3.190; on troop deployment, 3.427, 3.473; and UK/USSR talks (Feb '65), 3.327–330; and US involvement in SE Asia, 3.738–741; on U.S. objectives in Vietnam, 4.181; Vietnam visit of, 4.149; "Where Are We Heading?" draft memo, 3.326–328, 3.692
Bunker, Amb. Ellsworth: 2.400, 2.615, 2.616, 4.243–244; assessment of situation in Vietnam, 4.515–516; on bombing, 4.192; at Guam Conference, 4.424; and "other war," 2.575; public statement of, 4.217; on RVNAF, 2.509
Burchette, Wilfred: 4.207
Burns, Gen. James H.: 1.363
Buu, Ta Quang: 1.146
Buu, Tran Quoc: 2.723, 2.781
Byrd, Sen. Harry F., Sr.: 4.197

Calhoun, Archibald: 2.520, 2.619
Califano, Joseph: 2.567
Can, Ngo Dinh: 1.253, 2.226, 2.256, 2.686, 2.733, 2.767
Cang, Adm.: 2.346, 2.347
Cannon, Sen. Howard W.: 4.30, 4.197
Cao, Gen. Huynh Van: 2.232, 2.237, 2.265, 2.266, 2.267, 2.268
Cao, Brig. Gen. Van Thanh: 2.674
Carbonel, Col. Jean: 1.575
Carpentier, Gen. Marcel: 1.67, 1.369

Carter, Gen. Marshall S.: 2.684–689, 2.741

Carver, George: 2.598, 4.86, 4.130, 4.268, 4.592, 4.593; on bombing, 4.129; on NLF, 1.341; "perseverance" policy of, 4.82–83; and U.S. commitment in Vietnam, 4.89–90; on Viet Cong terrorism, 1.334–335

Castro, Fidel: 2.174

Chan, Le Ngoc (Sec. of State for Defense): 1.575

Chang, Amb. Wen-t'ien: 1.149, 1.549

Chau, Nguyen Huu: 1.560

Chauvel, Jean: 1.17, 1.112, 1.521, 1.542; at 1954 Geneva Conference, 1.532–533, 1.649

Chiang Kai-shek: 1.1, 1.10, 1.16, 2.13, 2.56, 2.322. *See also* Formosa

Chiang Kai-shek, Madame: 2.70

Childs, Marquis: 2.556

Chinh, Gen.: 2.394

Chou En-lai: 1.620; on cease-fire in SVN, 1.147; at Geneva Conference, 1.133, 1.137, 1.156–157, 1.522, 1.535, 1.545, 1.562; and Ho Chi Minh, 1.148–149; on Laos and Cambodia, 1.137–138; and Mendès-France, 1.537–538; Vietnam settlement and, 1.537, 1.538

Choung, Tran Van: 1.566

Church, Sen. Frank S.: 2.204, 2.242, 2.245

Churchill, Winston: 1.1, 1.10–11, 1.98

Clark, Col. Carter: 2.504

Clark, Gen. Mark: 1.369

Clark, Robert E.: 1.606

Clifford, Clark: 4.233–234, 4.267, 4.268, 4.546; advice to LBJ, 4.592; and allied troop commitments, 4.527; and JCS, 4.258; memo to President, 2.635; military policy of, 4.603

Co, Col.: 2.265, 2.266, 2.267, 2.384

Co, Gen.: 2.365, 2.480, 2.532

Cohelan, Rep. Jeffery: 3.36

Colby, William: 2.539, 2.741

Collins, Gen. J. Lawton: 1.182, 1.224, 1.580, 2.408, 2.431; and Diem Government, 1.226, 1.232; on VNA, 1.218, 1.219; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539. *See also* Collins Mission

Conein, Maj. Lucien: 1.575; and Diem coup, 2.237, 2.239, 2.256, 2.261, 2.267, 2.782, 2.788; para-military organization of, 1.577

Cooper, Charles: 2.520, 2.619

Cooper, Chester: 2.541, 3.255, 3.681; report on infiltration, 3.244, 3.255–256; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539

Cooper, Sen. John Sherman: 3.263

Corcoran: 2.375

Coste-Floret, Paul: 1.57, 1.64

Cottrell, Sterling: 2.15, 2.49, 2.126; and Task Force on Vietnam, 2.643; on Taylor Mission, 2.80, 2.96

Craig, May: 1.605

Critchfield, Richard: 2.557

Cronkite, Walter: 2.799, 2.827

Cung, Kieu Cong: 1.307

Cut, Ba: 1.220

Cutler, Robert: 1.502, 1.515–516

Dan, Phan Quang: 1.60, 1.72, 1.315–316

Dao, Maj.: 3.28

d'Argenlieu, Adm.: 1.21, 1.22, 1.23–25

da Silva, Peer: 2.539, 3.41

Davis, Adm. A. C.: 1.89, 1.212, 1.446

De, Tran Dinh: 2.106

Dean, Arthur: 4.267, 4.591

Dear, Joseph: 1.598

de Gaulle, Charles: 1.1, 2.162, 3.354, 4.23, 4.619; Geneva Conference and, 3.308; Indochina policy of, 1.17, 2.193; Vietnam negotiations and, 4.94

Dejean, Maurice: 1.135

de Lattre de Tassigny, Gen. Jean: 1.67

DePuy, Gen. William E.: 2.339, 4.267, 4.331–332, 4.592, 4.593

De Segonzac: 4.683

Devillers, Philippe: 1.136, 1.251, 1.254

Diem, Bai: 2.387

Diem, Ngo Dinh: 1.43, 1.58, 1.296, 2.1, 2.9, 2.94, 2.117; achievements of, 1.252, 1.298, 2.79; administration of, 2.4, 2.94, 2.135, 2.137, 2.138, 2.679; aftermath of, 3.17; aid request of, 2.3, 2.4, 2.51; alternatives to, 2.23, 2.203, 2.204, 2.229, 2.231, 2.235, 2.239, 2.241–246, 2.249, 2.251, 2.261; anticommunist campaign of, 1.255, 1.324–325, 1.326–327; anti-French position of, 1.210–211; armed opposition to, 1.183, 1.258, 1.303–305; army and, 1.257; assassination of, 2.189, 2.207, 2.270, 2.752, 3.17; on Bao Dai solution, 1.59, 1.234; and bilateral defense treaty, 2.55, 2.69, 2.71, 2.81–82, 2.84, 2.96, 2.447; and Binh Xuyen, 1.230–231, 1.233–234, 1.235; Buddhist crisis and, 2.202, 2.226, 2.227, 2.228; Buddhist leaders and, 2.727–728, 2.729–730, 3.20; cabinet reorganization of, 2.705; Cara-

Diem, Ngo Dinh: (*cont'd*)
velle Manifesto against, 1.316–321; character of, 2.665, 2.724, 2.759; as "Churchill of Asia," 2.54; Gen. Collins' objections to, 1.226; Communist attempts to discredit, 2.53; controversy surrounding, 1.182; and counterinsurgency effort, 2.691; coups against, 1.219–220, 2.266, 2.268, 2.269 (*see also* Diem coup); criticism of, 2.704, 2.709; deposition of, 2.158, 2.201–276, 2.716, 4.675; Amb. Durbrow and, 2.27, 2.28–29; elections and, 1.245, 1.246, 1.287, 1.542; family of, 1.200, 1.299, 1.321–322, 2.706–707, 2.731–732; and France, 1.183, 1.225, 1.232, 1.236–237, 1.575; Franco-American differences on, 1.236–238, 1.304; and generals, 2.703; and Geneva Accords, 1.245; and Geneva Conference, 1.570, 1.576; guard battalion of, 1.582; and Gen. Harkins, 2.785; on ICC support, 1.241; interview with Marguerite Higgins, 2.230; Joint Communique with Vice Pres. Johnson, 2.803; letter to Pres. Kennedy, 2.62, 2.447; lack of confidence in, 1.297, 2.15, 2.88, 2.100, 2.105, 2.122, 2.123, 2.125, 2.134, 2.250, 2.315; LBJ and, 2.3, 2.9; martial law of, 2.184; McNamara's views on, 3.22; military strategy of, 2.4; military opposition to, 1.322–324; and Gen. Minh, 1.580; National Emergency Proclamation of, 2.84, 2.99; nationalist opposition to, 1.314–322; and Ngo Dinh Nhu, 2.739–740; November 1960 coup against, 2.18, 2.20–21, 2.26, 2.134; oppressions of, 2.766; optimism of, 1.611; palace bombing and, 2.705; "personalist" philosophy of, 1.300–301, 2.145, 2.152; popular support of, 2.642, 3.23; press relations of, 2.724; prestige of, 2.759; reelection of, 2.32; reforms of, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.11, 2.54, 2.137; on refugees, 2.133; Saigon units loyal to, 2.788; and "single province plan," 2.144; state of union message of, 2.252; Strategic Hamlet Program and, 2.129, 2.130, 2.131, 2.146, 2.152, 2.153, 2.701, 2.702; and students, 3.20; tax reform of, 2.62; and Taylor Mission, 2.15, 2.86, 2.93, 2.95, 2.98; Thompson proposal and, 2.139; troop deployment of, 2.449; U.S. commitment to, 2.52, 2.671; U.S. confidence in, 2.53, 2.55, 2.715; U.S. demands on, 2.21, 2.27, 2.104; U.S. support of, 1.183, 1.226, 1.227, 1.234, 1.580, 1.588, 2.7, 2.22, 2.23, 2.123, 2.225, 2.456, 2.665, 2.705, 2.785; U.S. troops and, 2.66, 2.67, 2.81, 2.82, 2.84, 2.85, 2.87, 2.101, 2.102, 2.119, 2.447; on VC rural operations, 1.327. *See also* Diem family, Diem government

Dillon, C. Douglas: 4.267; advice to LBJ, 4.591; cables from Paris to Sec. of State, 1.476, 1.540, 1.541–542, 1.543–544, 1.545–546, 1.552–553, 1.553–554; on the French-Associated States, 1.125

Dinh, Nguyen Quoc: 1.134

Dinh, Maj. Gen. Ton That: 2.232, 2.233, 2.234, 2.374, 2.704, 2.736, 3.37; during Diem coup, 2.237, 2.240, 2.256, 2.260, 2.264–268

Dinh, Trieu: 1.582

Do: 2.550

Do, Tran Dinh (Sec. of State): 2.707

Do, Tran Van: 1.564, 1.566

Dobrynin, Amb. Anatoly F.: 4.447; on bombing, 4.35; Laos cease-fire and, 2.810

Dommen, Arthur: 3.264

Don, Maj. Gen. Tran Van: 2.106, 2.232, 2.233, 2.234, 2.237, 2.387, 3.37; coup plotting of, 2.256, 2.258, 2.259, 2.260, 2.261, 2.262, 2.264, 2.265, 2.266, 2.267, 2.269; during Diem coup, 2.206, 2.207, 2.253, 2.269, 2.767, 2.782, 2.784, 2.788; as Minister of Defense, 2.271, 2.275; post-coup role of, 2.271

Dong, Premier Pham Van: 3.292, 3.380; American public opinion and, 4.389; "Four Points" of, 3.274, 3.356, 4.94, 4.636; at Geneva Conference, 1.119; on partitioning of Indochina, 1.134

Dooley, Lt. Tom: 1.613

D'Orlandi, Amb.: 3.37

Downs, Hugh: 4.662

Drummond, Roscoe: 2.558

Drumright, Everett: 1.127

Duc, Thich Quang: 2.227

Dulles, Allan: 1.444, 1.447, 2.31

Dulles, John Foster (Sec. of State): 1.104, 1.105, 4.644; Address to the Nation, 1.600–601; on aid to French Union forces, 1.124, 1.131; anticommunism of, 1.54, 1.85; cable to Dillon, 1.547; cables from Geneva, 1.477–478, 1.478–479, 1.480–481, 1.481–482; cables to Geneva, 1.500–501, 1.507–508, 1.518–519, 1.523–524, 1.531, 1.532, 1.538–539, 1.563, 1.568; cables to London, 1.460, 1.461, 1.546;

cables from Paris, 1.461–462, 1.476, 1.516–518, 1.522–523, 1.537, 1.554–557; cables to Paris, 1.460, 1.461, 1.524, 1.539–540, 1.541, 1.542–543, 1.546–547, 1.547–548, 1.550–551; and cease-fire, 1.480; on Chinese intervention in Indochina, 1.85–86; on Dien Bien Phu, 1.100; domino theory of, 1.56, 1.106; on Franco-Viet Minh negotiations, 1.96, 1.116; on French-Associated States relationship, 1.125; and Geneva Conference, 1.80, 1.113–114, 1.117, 1.150, 1.176, 1.499–500, 1.546, 1.556; and Mendès-France, 1.550–551, 1.557; public statements of, 1.593–596, 1.599, 1.603–604; on regional defense for SE Asia, 1.98–99; report on Paris trip, 1.558–559; on supporting Diem Government, 1.227–228, 1.236–237; on training the VNA, 1.216–217; on "united action" in Indochina, 1.93–94, 1.476, 1.482; Vietnamese elections and, 1.145–146, 1.245; on U.S. involvement in Indochina, 1.481–482, 2.408
Dung, Tran Trung: 2.260
Dupont, Frédéric: 1.64
Durbow, Amb. Elbridge: 1.269, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.10, 2.20, 2.25; cable to Sec. Herter, 2.633; CIP and, 2.138; departure of, 2.7, 2.26, 2.29, 2.30; Diem and, 2.7, 2.27, 2.28–29, 2.31; diplomacy of, 2.27, 2.29–30, 2.32, 2.228; Thuan and, 2.60
Durdin, Peg: 1.581
Durdin, Till: 1.581

Eden, Anthony: 1.14, 1.116; cable from Dulles, 1.546; on cease-fire, 1.479; on collective defense of SE Asia, 1.142; on Dien Bien Phu, 1.478; and Geneva Conference, 1.112, 1.137–138, 1.480, 1.519–520, 1.544, 1.546; and Mendès-France, 1.557; SE Asia policy of, 1.99, 1.101–103, 1.477
Eisenhower, Pres. Dwight David: 4.679; and Diem, 1.628–629, 2.635, 4.641; on Dien Bien Phu, 1.101; on domino theory, 2.636; and Dulles, 1.502; on Franco-Viet Minh negotiations, 1.116; and Geneva Conference, 1.118, 1.176, 1.507; on Indochina, 1.85, 1.98–99, 1.129, 1.503; and JFK, 2.635–637; news conferences of, 1.593, 1.602, 1.603, 1.604–606, 1.621–622; public statements of, 1.591–592, 1.609–610, 1.616–621, 1.624–627; special messages to Congress of, 1.613–614, 1.622–624, 1.627–628; on U.S. intervention in Indochina, 1.77, 1.94; Vietnam policy of, 1.593, 4.643, 4.672
Ely, Gen. Paul: 1.97, 1.104, 1.443, 1.541; on Chinese intervention, 1.458–459; Diem and, 1.232, 1.545; and French Union Forces, 1.517–518; at Geneva Conference, 1.516–518; and Indochina situation, 1.122, 1.457, 1.459; *Memoires: l'Indochine dans la Tourmente,* 1.136; U.S. aid and, 1.455–456
Enthoven, Alain (Asst. Sec. of Defense): 2.510, 4.309, 4.310, 4.313, 4.314, 4.318, 4.322, 4.512, 4.513; advisory effort and, 2.514; analysis of MACV troop requirements, 4.456; on bombing, 4.225; memos to McNamara, 4.225, 4.363–364, 4.461–462, 4.463–466; on piaster budget, 4.345; policy review of, 4.550; on Program 4, 4.363–364; and Program 5, 4.523; on SEA forces, 4.463–466; on troop increase, 4.461–462, 4.513–514
Erhard, Chancellor Ludwig: 4.619
Erskine, Gen. Graves B.: 1.197, 1.446, 1.451, 1.90
Evans, Roland: 2.610

Fall, Bernard: 1.1, 4.673; on DRV-VC links, 1.337; on VC assassinations, 1.336; on Viet Minh terrorism, 1.334
Fanfani, Amintore: 4.237
Faure, Edgar (Prime Minister): 1.237
Felt, Adm. Harry: 2.13; on Buddhist crisis, 2.234; Diem and, 2.55, 2.664; during Diem coup, 2.260, 2.267; meeting with Khanh, 2.310; on troop commitment and, 2.83–84. *See also* CINCPAC
Firyubin: 3.372
Fisher, Roger: barrier concept of, 4.112; notes to McNaughton on strategy, 4.113–115, 4.148; proposal to Pres. Johnson, 4.160
Fitzgerald, Desmond: 2.539
Ford, Rep. Gerald: 4.389
Forrestal, Michael V.: 2.317, 2.318; on Buddhist crisis, 2.233, 2.234; memo to Bundy, 3.592; report to JFK, 2.151, 2.717–725; SVN evaluation of, 2.727; view on end of war, 2.719
Franks, Sir Oliver: 1.381
Freeman, Orville (Sec. of Agriculture): 2.543, 2.551
Friedman, Alvin: 2.539

Fulbright, Sen. J. W.: 2.2, 3.187, 3.287, 4.159, 4.262, 4.588; on Laos intervention, 2.42; "Old Myths and New Realities" speech, 3.287; on Tonkin Gulf Resolution, 4.98; Vietnam hearings of, 2.543. *See also* Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Galbraith, John Kenneth: 2.117, 2.121, 2.122, 2.123, 2.124, 2.125, 2.4, 2.37, 2.410; on Diem, 2.5, 2.30, 2.147; memo for JFK, 2.670; Vietnam policy of, 2.670
Gambiez, Gen. Jean: 1.231
Gardner, John W. (Sec. of HEW): 2.543
Gates, Thomas (Sec. of Defense): 2.635
Gaud, William: 2.590
Gavin, Lt. Gen. James M.: military policy of, 4.587; before Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4.98, 4.454
Gelb, Leslie: 4.550
Geyelin, Philip: 3.307, 4.106
Giap, Gen. Vo Nguyen: 1.246, 4.634–635, 4.643; in Cambodia, 1.120; in Laos, 1.120; "strategic mobility" of, 4.305
Gilpatric, Roswell (Deputy Sec. of Defense): 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.16, 2.235; and August Plot, 2.741; on involvement in GVN, 2.442; memo to JCS, 2.48; NSC memo of, 2.79–80; recommendations of, 4.1; task force of, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.37, 2.391, 2.443
Giraud, Gen. Henri: 1.9
Goldberg, Amb. Arthur J.: public addresses of, 4.645–646, 4.650–651; statement before U. N., 4.659–660
Goldwater, Sen. Barry S.: 2.328, 3.292
Goodpaster, Gen. Nathaniel: 4.291
Goulding, Phil: 4.417, 4.559
Goure, Leon: 2.539
Grant, Lindsay: 3.301
Greene, Graham: 1.321–322, 2.535
Griffin, Robert Allen: 1.66; memo to Sec. of State, 1.367–369; survey mission of, 1.370
Gromyko, Andrei (Soviet Foreign min.): 2.810, 3.266
Gruenther, Gen. Alfred: 1.369
Gullion, Edmund: 1.68, 1.74, 1.78

Habib, Philip C.: 2.520, 4.267, 4.592, 4.593; appointment of, 2.563; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539
Hai, Vo Van: 2.234
Halberstam, David: 2.613, 3.23–24, 3.426
Halifax, Lord (British Amb. to Washington): 1.9, 1.10
Halperin, Morton H.: policy review of, 4.550
Hamilton, Fowler: 2.666
Hammer, Ellen: 1.80–81
Hanh, Gov.: 2.370, 2.389; as economic minister, 2.400, economic policy of, 2.289; Washington trip of, 2.396
Harkins, Gen. Paul D.: 2.163, 2.187, 2.205, 2.206, 2.456; and advisory effort, 2.465; cables to Gen. Taylor, 2.740, 2.784–785; and CAS group, 3.34; and Diem, 2.303, 2.752; during Diem coup, 2.237, 2.240, 2.246, 2.248, 2.250, 2.251, 2.253, 2.255, 2.257, 2.258, 2.260, 2.261, 2.262, 2.263, 2.737, 2.792, 2.793; evaluation of military situation (1964), 3.69; Distinguished Service Medal, 2.468; Amb. Lodge and, 2.786; meeting with Khanh, 2.310; optimism of, 2.275; state department cables, 2.736. *See also* COMUSMACV
Harlech, Lord (William David Ormsby Gore): 3.325, 3.326
Harriman, Amb. Averell (Under Sec. of State): 2.29, 2.76, 2.149, 4.257, 4.267; advice to LBJ, 4.592; on Buddhist crisis, 2.233, 2.234; on communism, 2.817; during Diem coup, 2.238; and peace negotiations, 4.272, 4.598; SVN evaluation of (1963), 2.727; and USSR, 2.670
Harsch, Joseph C.: 4.662
Heath, Amb. Donald R.: 1.78, 1.104, 1.226–227
Heavner, Theodore J. C.: 2.825–827
Hellyer, George (USIS Chief): 1.575
Helms, Richard: as acting director of CIA, 2.590, 4.64, 4.267; advice to LBJ, 4.592; August Plot and, 2.741; on bombing, 4.184
Herfurt, Jack: 2.538
Herman, George: 1.602
Herter, Christian A. (Sec. of State): 2.635, 2.636
Heyman, Victor K.: 4.471
Heymann, Hans: 2.404, 2.503
Heymann, Vince: 2.520, 2.613
Hilsman, Roger (Asst. Sec. of State): 2.25, 2.37, 2.117, 2.142, 2.146, 2.148, 2.152, 3.43; August Plot and, 2.741; on Buddhist crisis, 2.234; on coup possibilities, 2.231; on Diem coup, 2.235, 2.236, 2.238, 2.240, 2.241, 2.242, 2.245; and Amb. Lodge, 2.254;

on McNamara-Taylor Mission, 2.248; "pressure and persuasion" proposal of, 2.246; public statements of, 2.821–824; resignation of, 3.43; State Dept. memo of, 2.690; SVN evaluation of (1963), 2.727, 3.43
Hinh, Gen. Nguyen Van: 1.163; anti-Diem activity of, 1.219, 1.322, 1.577; on Vietnamese partition, 1.163
Hitch, Charles J.: 3.549–550
Hoan, Nguyen Ton: exile to Japan, 3.87; as Vice Premier, 2.327
Ho Chi Minh: 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 1.63, 1.600, 2.99, 2.708; allies of, 4.110; anti-colonialism of, 2.818; on China, 1.49–.50, 1.362; and coalition govt., 1.442; as communist agent, 1.361; and de Gaulle, 4.94; elections and, 1.546; France and, 1.24, 1.46, 1.49, 1.54; letter to LBJ, 4.144, 4.455; negotiation offer of, 1.95; on partition, 1.289; political philosophy of, 1.48–51, 1.52, 4.57, 4.94; supplies of, 1.594; and Tonkin Delta region, 1.519; and U.S. aid, 1.17, 1.50–51; U.S. State Dept. appraisal of, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6–7, 1.40, on unification of Vietnam, 1.172
Hoi, Prince Buu: 1.221
Holmes, Oliver Wendell: 2.810
Honey, P. J.: 1.255, 1.325
Hua, Huang: as member of CPR delegation, 1.155, 1.566
Hughes, Thomas L.: 2.770, 4.66
Hull, Cordell: 1.8, 1.9, 1.14
Humphrey, Hubert H.: 3.250; on communism, 4.647–648; and pacification program, 4.312; public addresses of, 4.655–656; support for Diem, 1.297; Vietnam visit of, 2.556, 2.558, 2.560, 4.312, 4.646–647
Humphries, Maj. Gen. James: 2.551
Hunnicutt, Col.: 2.394
Huntley, Chet: 2.827, 2.828
Huong, Tran Van: 2.277, 2.281, 2.340, 2.353, 2.354; and Gen. Khanh, 2.348, 3.261; overthrow of, 3.293; U.S. support for, 2.342, 3.259
Hutchins, Maj. Gen.: 2.539
Huu, Tran Van: 1.61, 1.225

Iron Mike. *See* O'Daniel, Gen. John

Jackson, Sen. Henry: 4.197
Jacobson, Col. George: 2.385, 2.583, 2.584
Jacquet, Marc: 1.104
Jenkins, Alfred le Sesne: 1.596–1.597
Johnson, Gen. Harold K.: 2.501, 2.576; as Army Chief of Staff, 3.5, 3.94, 3.95, 3.320; on bombing, 4.207, 4.208; and enclave strategy, 3.453; and Program #5, 4.528, 4.529; public statement by, 4.401; and reserve call-up, 4.314; Saigon visit of, 4.527; 21-point program of, 2.257, 3.337–338; on troop deployment, 4.472; Vietnam visit of, 2.479, 3.428
Johnson, Louis (Sec. of Defense): 1.82
Johnson, Pres. Lyndon B.: 2.3, 2.47, 2.369, 4.644; advisors of, 4.592; announcement on ROLLING THUNDER, 3.322; anti-infiltration barrier and, 4.124; on appropriations, 3.475; on ARVN, 4.443; assessment of situation in SVN, 3.72–73; "A to Z" policy review of, 4.239; attack on U.S. Embassy, 3.348; and August Plot, 2.741; on bombing, 3.180–181, 3.354, 3.363, 4.50, 4.133, 4.149, 4.151, 4.259, 4.268; on budget, 4.361; Bundy's paean to, 4.159; cables to Amb. Lodge, 2.527–528, 2.561, 2.601–602, 3.511; cable to Gen. Taylor, 3.321; cable to Gen. Westmoreland, 2.561; on civilian govt. in SVN, 2.339–340; Clifford Group recommendations and, 4.252; on Communism, 4.394; on Communist China, 3.741; criticism of, 4.197, 4.199, 4.263; and Diem, 2.19, 2.45, 2.54, 2.65; on Diem coup, 2.231, 2.276; effect of election of, 3.1; and 82nd Airborne Division, 4.238; escalation and, 2.199, 4.145, 4.148–149; foreign aid program of, 4.455; Great Society of, 2.555; at Guam Conference, 4.424; and Ho Chi Minh, 4.143; at Honolulu Conference, 2.549; "I shall not seek" speech, 4.268, 4.271–275, 4.596–602; and JCS objectives, 4.536; Johns Hopkins speech, 3.355, 3.356, 3.435, 4.273; Joint Communiqué with Diem, 2.803; and Khanh government, 2.314; Kosygin and, 4.455; and Ky gov't, 2.285, 2.287, 2.543; letter to Ho Chi Minh, 4.144, 4.455; leverage policy, 3.337; at Manila Conference, 4.130, 4.131; and McNamara, 4.125–127, 4.205, 4.323, 4.624–625; middle course of, 4.100, 4.136; military advisors of, 4.216; and Minh gov't, 2.305; on mining of waterways, 4.148; news conference of, 4.632; negotiated settlement and, 3.273, 4.591; New Year's greeting to the GVN, 2.303–304; and NSAM 328,

Johnson, Pres. Lyndon B.: (*cont'd*) 3.454; and NSC Working Group, 3.249; and objectives in SVN, 2.323, 4.248; and pacification program, 2.507, 4.470; and peace movement, 4.263; on Pleiku attack, 3.286, 3.307; and POL decision, 4.74–79; policy decisions of, 2.196, 3.248; policy reviews of, 2.191, 3.264, 4.593, 4.595; presidential campaign of, 3.111; on Program #5, 4.527, 4.529; public relations of, 2.321, 4.93, 4.216, 4.389; public statements of, 3.101, 3.273, 3.292, 3.355, 4.639, 4.640, 4.644, 4.656–657, 4.658–659, 4.667–668, 4.678–680; and Prime Min. Quat, 3.366; recommendations of, 3.170; reprisal attacks and, 3.295; on reserve call-up, 4.93; on SEATO commitment, 3.720; State of Union Address, 4.233, 4.639, 4.662; and SVN Country Team, 3.80; and Amb. Taylor, 2.327, 3.79, 3.249, 3.250; "Three Faces of War" speech, 3.370; "Why Are We in South Vietnam" speech, 3.730; on troop deployment, 2.68, 3.102, 3.394, 3.447, 3.451–452, 3.473–476, 4.108, 4.196, 4.299, 4.524, 4.589; and U.S. Congress, 3.73; on U.S. policy in SE Asia, 3.324, 3.718–719, 3.725; vice-presidential Vietnam visit of, 2.7, 2.9, 2.10, 2.34, 2.45, 2.47, 2.54, 2.93, 2.135, 2.445, 2.446, 2.705; Vietnam policy of, 2.458, 3.2, 3.249, 3.702–703, 4.91, 4.177; views on SVN involvement, 3.161, 3.247, 3.251; and Gen. Westmoreland, 4.239, 4.441–443, 4.478
Johnson, Robert: 3.222
Johnson, Amb. U. Alexis: 1.113, 2.13, 2.356, 2.537, 2.538, 3.4; on bombing, 4.33; cables from Geneva, 1.548–549; on Diem, 2.126; on escalation, 4.26, 4.27; at Geneva Conf., 1.566; letter to Gilpatric, 2.661; memo to McNamara, 2.662; public statements of, 2.817–818; reaction to FWMAF in SVN, 3.105; and Taylor Report, 2.98; on troop deployment, 3.472
Jordan, William: 2.15, 2.80, 2.96
Jorgenson (CIA station chief): 2.539
Judd, Rep. Walter: 1.85
Just, Ward: 2.592, 2.599, 2.613, 2.619

Kahin, George M.C.: 1.260
Kalischer, Peter: 4.635
Kattenburg, Paul: 2.240, 2.241; August Plot and, 2.741; on Diem, 2.738
Katzenbach, Nicholas deB. (Under Sec. of State): 2.487, 4.242, 4.246, 4.267, 4.269, 4.354; advice to LBJ, 4.592; on bombing halt, 4.262; DPM of, 4.183, 4.505–508; and JCS, 4.129; memo to President, 2.591–594; on pacification, 2.599; policy review of, 4.154, 4.396–.399; Saigon visit of, 2.519, 2.591; Vietnam review of, 4.438–439
Kaysen, Dr. Karl: 2.726, 4.115
Keenan, Amb. George: 2.37, 4.98
Kendrick, Alexander: 4.635
Kennedy, Sen. Edward M.: 4.402
Kennedy, Pres. John F.: 4.679; on aid suspension, 2.235; April 1961 decisions of, 2.38–39; assassination of, 2.164, 2.190, 3.1, 3.17, 3.28; on Bao Dai solution, 1.72; on Buddhist crisis, 2.241–242; cable to Lodge, 2.746; and Diem coup, 2.31, 2.235, 2.238, 2.239, 2.257; on domino theory, 2.162; inauguration of, 2.6; and interdepartmental task force report, 2.637–642; on justification of war, 2.810; and Laos crisis, 2.799; letter to Diem, 2.185, 2.805–806; and McNamara-Taylor mission, 2.118, 2.184, 2.247, 2.248, 2.251; memo to McNamara, 2.748; news conferences of, 2.33, 2.805, 2.806–807, 2.810–811, 2.813, 2.816–819, 2.824–825, 2.828; programs of (1961–63), 2.438–457; public statements of, 2.801–802, 2.809–810, 2.811, 2.813, 2.828–830; Special Message to Congress, 2.800–801, 2.804; State of the Union Message, 2.806, 2.815, 2.816; on Strategic Hamlet Program, 2.148; SVN evaluation of, 2.727; on troop deployment, 2.117, 2.67; TV interviews of, 2.827–828; United Nations Address, 2.804–805; as U.S. Senator, 2.798–799; Vietnam commitment of, 2.1, 2.4, 2.50, 2.51, 2.450, 2.808; Vietnamese policy of, 2.410, 2.726, 2.815
Kennedy, Sen. Robert: 2.557, 4.589; on bombing, 4.454; on coalition government, 4.98; as presidential candidate, 4.263; on Vietnam commitment, 2.243
Khanh, Gen. Nguyen: 2.193, 2.196, 2.235, 2.278, 2.279, 2.280, 2.281, 2.317, 2.347, 2.353, 3.45, 3.292; Buddhist alliance of, 2.352; and Constituent Assembly, 3.261; defeat of, 2.345; during Diem coup, 2.237, 2.238, 2.260, 2.264, 2.272; government of, 2.308, 2.309, 2.319 (*see also* Khanh

government); and Hop Tac Program, 2.525; impatience with war policy, 3.64, 3.66, 3.71–72; Laos policy of, 3.173; and leverage, 2.498; march to the north, 3.81–82; and McNamara, 2.312, 2.315, 3.48, 3.71; military policy of, 2.321, 2.322; National Mobilization Plan of, 2.197, 2.282–283, 2.314, 2.316, 3.67, 3.165; offensive tactics of, 2.328; overthrow of, 3.325, 3.433; overthrow of Huong, 3.259–262; pacification program of, 3.54, 3.504, 3.551; political crisis of, 2.334–338; resignation of, 2.334, 2.341, 3.86; and Rusk, 2.320–323; and state of emergency, 2.329; and Gen. Taylor, 2.327, 2.348, 2.350, 2.499, 3.80, 3.260; U.S. support of, 3.37, 3.78, 3.260–261; during triumvirate, 2.335, 2.339
Khiem, Gen. Tran Thien: and August plot, 2.232, 2.742; cross border operations, 3.539; during Diem coup, 2.206, 2.207, 2.237, 2.240, 2.256, 2.258, 2.260, 2.264, 2.266, 2.767, 2.768; exile of, 2.339; during Khanh crisis, 2.335; in triumvirate, 2.335
Khrushchev, Nikita S.: 4.643; Far East policy of, 1.618; at Vienna talks, 2.57; wars of national liberation concept, 1.260, 2.98
Khuang, Xieng: 2.79
Khuong, Col.: 2.258
Killen: 2.479
Kim, Gen. Le Van: 2.234, 2.307, 2.767, 3.37; during Diem coup, 2.206–207, 2.237, 2.238, 2.239, 2.256, 2.258, 2.264; post-coup role of, 2.271
Kimny, Amb. Nong: 1.154
King, Adm. Ernest L.: 1.10
Kirkpatrick, Lyman D.: 3.41, 3.42
Kissinger, Henry: 2.564
Kistiakowsky, Dr. George: 4.115
Knowlton, Brig. Gen. William: 2.605
Kohler, Amb. Foy: 3.328; during bombing pause, 3.371; Soviet policy and, 3.332, 3.373
Komer, Amb. Robert: as "blowtorch," 2.519, 2.567–575; as Deputy to COMUSMACV, 2.617; as Deputy for Pacification, 4.470; at Guam Conference, 4.424; as head of CORDS, 4.155; on leverage, 2.503, 2.504; memoranda to LBJ, 2.608, 4.439–441; optimistic Vietnam prognosis of, 2.575, 4.390–391, 4.420; on pacification, 2.515, 2.565, 2.570, 2.590, 4.93; policy reviews of, 2.486–487, 4.82; rank of, 2.536; and Roles and Missions Report, 2.586; Saigon visit of, 2.396, 2.400; as Special Assistant for "Peaceful Reconstruction," 2.378, 2.387, 2.518, 2.520
Kong Le: 2.36, 2.637
Koren, Henry: 2.520, 2.613
Kornienko: 3.373
Kosygin, Alexei: 4.643; and Geneva Conference, 4.94; letters to LBJ, 4.455; and negotiations, 4.143; visit to Hanoi, 3.270, 3.301, 3.303, 4.446
Krag: 4.95
Krulak, Gen. Victor H.: 2.192, 2.204, 2.534, 2.728; on August Plot, 2.741, 2.743; briefings for Defense Dept., 3.29; optimism of, 2.231, 2.243–244, 2.245; on pacification program, 2.535; Vietnam visit of, 2.152, 2.158. *See also* Krulak-Mendenhall mission
Kuznetsov, Vasily: 1.148
Ky, Marshal Nguyen Cao: 3.88; ambitions of, 2.342, 2.347; attempted coup planned by, 2.342; and Buddhist revolt, 4.101; on combined command, 2.363, 2.477; as Commander of Vietnamese Air Force, 2.362, 2.365, 2.556, 3.260; coup of, 2.278, 2.281, 2.361; coup scare and, 2.368; economic policy of, 2.289; elections and, 4.480; at Guam Conference, 4.424; and Hop Tac Program, 2.525; Laos policy of, 2.328; on pacification, 4.353; presidential candidacy of, 2.395; as prime minister, 3.434; on RD, 2.594; relations with Thi, 2.285, 2.370, 2.376, 2.377; and Struggle Movement, 2.285; and Thieu, 4.579; U.S. speaking engagement of, 2.399; U.S. support of, 4.577; as Young Turk, 2.346
Kyes, Roger: 1.445, 1.446

La Chambre, Guy: 1.214, 1.223
Lacouture, Jean: 1.136, 4.673
La Forest, M.: 1.236–237
Lam, Pham Dang: 2.272
Laniel, Premier Joseph: 1.77, 1.96, 1.104, 1.406; requests for U.S. aid of, 1.124–125, 1.443
Lansdale, Maj. Gen. Edward G.: 1.447, 2.2, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.35, 2.125, 2.440, 2.526; as chief of SMM, 1.573, 1.574; counter-subversion workers under, 2.530; on Diem's personalism, 1.301; Diem's request for, 2.126; on French anti-Diem activity, 1.231–232; memo to Gilpatric, 2.11; memo to Gen. Taylor, 2.643; on pacification program,

Lansdale, Maj. Gen. Edward G.: (*cont'd*) 2.531; pro-Diem policy of, 2.26–27, 2.30, 2.39, 2.53, 2.54; role of (1961), 2.37–38, 2.39; "social revolution" and, 2.557; on Taylor Mission, 2.17, 2.80, 2.95 (*see also* Taylor Mission); Vietnam policy of, 2.37, 2.43–44, 2.517. *See also* Lansdale report
Lao, Col. Hoang Van: 2.674, 2.679
Lapin: 3.328
Lathram, L. Wade: 2.520, 2.612
Lawrence, William H.: 4.631
Lay, James S., Jr.: 1.385, 1.405, 1.413, 1.434
LBJ: *See* Johnson, Lyndon Baines
Le, Gen. Nguyen Ngoc: during Diem coup, 1.234, 2.237
Leahy, Adm. William D.: 1.13
Leclerc, Gen. Jean: 1.23, 1.24, 1.25
Leddy, John: 2.639
Le Duan: 1.263
Lemley, Gen.: 4.593
Lemnitzer, Gen. Lyman L.: 2.29, 2.117, 2.149; memo for Gen. Lansdale, 2.659
Leonhart, Amb. William: 2.568, 2.615, 4.470
Letourneau, Jean: 1.64, 1.69, 1.405, 2.382
Lewis, John W.: 1.260
Lewis, Ted: 2.556
Lieberman, Hank: 1.581
Li K'e-nung: 1.149, 1.154, 1.549
Lilienthal, David: 4.424
Lin Piao: 1.66, 4.643, 4.646
Lippmann, Walter: 2.117, 3.354, 4.159, 4.389
Lisagor, Peter: 1.621
Loan, Brig. Gen.: 2.398
Locke, Dep. Amb. Eugene: 2.400, 2.520, 2.583; at Guam Conference, 4.424; and reorganization of Saigon Mission, 2.619
Lodge, George: at Warrenton Conference, 2.539
Lodge, Amb. Henry Cabot: 2.126, 2.161, 2.185, 2.189, 2.192, 2.196, 2.280, 2.365, 2.519, 2.567, 2.575, 3.28, 4.379; appointment of, 2.202, 2.230; and "big push" concept, 4.328, 4.331–332; on bombing, 3.173, 4.38, 4.49, 4.76; and Buddhist crisis, 2.203, 2.233, 2.234, 2.735; cable to Bundy, 2.780; cable to JFK, 2.746–748; cables to LBJ, 2.602–604, 2.605, 2.606, 4.328; cable to Rusk, 2.738; cables to State Dept., 2.767, 2.792; carrot and stick program, 3.162–163; CIA cable to, 2.769; criticism of, 3.494; and Diem, 2.255, 2.742; during Diem coup, 2.206, 2.207, 2.235, 2.237, 2.239, 2.240, 2.242, 2.243, 2.245, 2.246–251, 2.253, 2.254, 2.257, 2.258–263, 2.268, 2.738, 3.18; endorsement of Abrams, 2.509; escalation and, 4.26, 4.27; Gallop Polls and, 4.99–100; and GVN, 2.480; and Gen. Harkins, 2.784; at Honolulu Conference, 2.190, 2.323, 2.324, 2.548; and Hop Tac Program, 2.521, 2.529; and inflation in Vietnam, 4.338, 4.339–343, 4.364; influence with Catholics, 2.372; on international forces in VN, 4.334; and Minh, 2.769; NODIS to President, 2.529, 2.587; optimism of, 4.389; on pacification effort, 2.494, 2.515, 2.517, 2.533, 4.328; political recommendations of, 2.188, 2.371, 2.380–381, 2.384, 3.69; and Porter, 2.605; post-coup role of, 2.270, 2.271, 2.274, 2.276, 2.303, 2.304; post-coup views of, 2.274, 2.275, 2.311; RD and, 4.331; reaction to Komer, 2.575; relations with Khanh, 2.310, 2.316–319, 2.325, 2.326, 3.37, 3.38, 3.60, 3.63, 3.66, 3.69; and reorganization of Saigon mission, 2.365, 2.537; resignation of, 2.537; return of, 2.482, 2.516, 2.527, 2.793; and ROLLING THUNDER, 4.39, 4.40; and Rusk, 2.605; on "social revolution," 2.557; State Dept. directives to, 2.376, 2.736–737, 2.766; on Struggle Movement, 2.378; and SVN Constitution, 2.384–385; and SVN politics, 2.307, 2.370, 2.372, 2.373, 2.374; and Tet truce, 4.141; view on end of war, 2.532, 2.548; White House cable to, 2.743
Loory, Stuart N.: 4.592
Lucas, Jim: 4.511
Luns: 4.95
Luong, Bui Van (Sec. of State): 2.674, 2.679, 2.704
Lyfoung, Touby: 2.646

MacArthur, Douglas II: 1.104
MacDonald, Malcolm: 1.304
MacDonald: duties of, 2.606
Magsaysay, Ramon: 2.440
Makins, Sir Roger: 1.98; on Geneva talks, 1.461
Mann (AID Dir.): 2.539
Mansfield, Sen. Mike: 1.222, 2.162, 2.830; on foreign policy, 2.813–814; on troop reduction in Europe, 4.402; Vietnam proposals of, 2.193, 3.263, 4.28

Mao Tse-tung: 1.620, 4.634; on armed revolution, 4.646

Marks, Leonard (USIA Director): 2.590; on truce extension, 4.142; and Warrenton Conference, 2.539

Marlowe, Sanford: at Warrenton Conference, 2.539

Marshall, George C. (Sec. of State): on Ho Chi Minh, 1.50; on U.S. Indochina policy, 1.31

Marx, Karl: 2.815

Massigli, René: 1.105

Mau, Do: 2.327

Mau, Vo Van: 2.236, 2.759

McCarthy, Sen. Eugene: 4.217, 4.263, 4.589

McClintock, Robert: 1.574; on military situation in Indochina, 1.521

McCone, John A.: 2.735, 3.32; bombing policy of, 3.283, 3.352–353, 3.364; on U.S. military strategy, 3.101

McConnell, Gen. John (Air Force Chief of Staff): bombing policy of, 3.320, 3.342–343, 3.384–385, 4.207

McGarr, Gen. Lionel C. (MAAG Chief): 2.11, 2.12, 2.14, 2.29, 2.34, 2.65, 2.67, 2.435, 2.664; and Big Minh, 2.100; on clear and hold strategy, 2.143, 2.144; and CIP, 2.138, 2.139; on combat troops in SVN, 2.66–67, 2.85; on military situation, 2.70; on Thompson proposal, 2.141, 2.142; and Vietnamese command problem, 2.659

McGovern, Sen. George: on bombing, 3.264

McNamara, Robert S. (Sec. of Defense): 2.4, 2.5, 2.8, 2.150, 2.287, 2.474, 2.504, 2.589, 3.3, 3.35, 3.156, 3.337, 3.338, 3.475, 4.105, 4.120, 4.123; on aid to Khanh government, 2.312–314, 2.315, 2.317; on aid to SVN, 3.94; August Plot and, 2.741; bombing policy of, 3.333, 3.339–340, 3.358, 3.359, 3.385, 4.28, 4.29, 4.30–31, 4.32–34, 4.37, 4.49, 4.50, 4.55, 4.68, 4.74–79, 4.112, 4.127, 4.183–.187, 4.191, 4.200, 4.201, 4.202–203, 4.204, 4.207, 4.303; Buddhist crisis and, 2.205, 2.230; on clear and hold strategy, 2.143, 2.144; before Congressional committee, 2.193–194, 3.22, 4.30, 4.31, 4.112 4.633–635; on Diem, 2.184, 3.20, 3.122; during Diem overthrow, 2.238, 2.239, 2.240, 2.241, 2.243; five-part program of, 4.355–356; on forward defense nations, 3.717; at Honolulu Conferences, 2.175–176, 2.180, 2.275, 2.323, 3.6, 3.358–359, 3.705–706, 4.311–315; on increased military aid, 2.436; and JCS, 3.555–556, 4.70, 4.318, 4.319, 4.326, 4.363–365; joint command and, 2.477; justification of the war, 2.193; on Laos, 3.156–157; memo to Gilpatric, 2.30–31; memos to Pres. Johnson, 2.162, 2.191, 2.192, 2.460, 2.594, 2.598, 3.494–496, 3.499–510, 4.77–78, 4.297, 4.303, 4.309, 4.311, 4.348–356, 4.365–378, 4.619–622, 4.622–623; memos to JCS, 3.555–556, 4.326, 4.363–365; memos to Pres. Kennedy, 2.16, 2.109, 2.662–666; military decision of (April 1964), 3.70; negotiations and, 2.597, 4.125, 4.356; on nuclear weapons, 3.238; pacification and, 2.589–590, 2.594, 2.599, 4.350; pessimism of, 2.363, 3.31, 3.32, 4.50, 4.107; phase-out plan and, 2.160–164, 2.173, 2.179, 2.182, 2.199, 2.200, 2.251; on piaster, 4.339, 4.343; public statements of, 4.236, 4.635; queries CINCPAC, 3.74–75; queries COMUSMACV, 3.74–75; report to LBJ (1964), 2.194–196; retirement of, 4.216; on reserve call-up, 4.93; on ROLLING THUNDER, 3.339–340; at Sec. of Defense Conference, 2.165; statement to Congress (Feb. 1968), 4.231–232; Strategic Hamlet Program and, 2.149; suppression of infiltration data, 3.256; on SVN economy, 2.757–758; on Thai troops, 4.524; on troop deployment, 2.470, 4.261, 4.317–318, 4.319, 4.323, 4.530, 4.623; on troop levels, 2.181, 2.463, 3.473–476, 4.23, 4.24–27, 4.297, 4.311, 4.318, 4.322, 4.526; truce limitations and, 4.142; on VC infrastructure, 4.513; Vietnam visits of, 2.151, 2.164, 2.311–312, 2.318, 2.462–463, 2.504, 2.511, 2.591, 2.600, 2.745, 2.748, 3.47, 3.67–72, 4.195, 4.208, 4.295–296, 4.348, 4.622–623; on Vietnamese military support, 3.36, 4.510–511; view on end of war, 2.595; and Warrenton Conference, 2.539; on wars of liberation, 3.712–715, 3.737; and Westmoreland, 4.586. *See also* McNamara-Taylor Mission

McNaughton, John T. (Asst. Sec. for Defense): 3.199, 3.222, 3.293, 3.297, 4.21, 4.22; on "Action for South Vietnam," 3.598–601; and attacks on NVN POL network, 4.103; on bombing, 2.349–351, 4.32–33, 4.34, 4.38, McNaughton, John T.: (*cont'd*) 4.42–46, 4.68, 4.142, 4.160, 4.165, 4.475, 4.483–484; cable to Bundy, 3.529; and compromise solution, 3.484; DPM of, 4.189, 4.477–489, 4.504; hard-line policy of, 4.48; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; and JCS, 4.301; and Johnson-Ho letter exchange, 4.151; on Khanh government, 3.686; memo for Gen. Goodpaster, 4.291; memos to McNamara, 3.555, 3.584, 3.694–702, 4.113–114; military recommendations of, 3.448, 4.92; on negotiations, 4.25; "perseverance" of, 3.267; pessimism of, 3.346, 4.46–48, 4.84, 4.393; "Plan of Action" of, 3.204, 3.348, 3.557–559, 3.695; SVN political crisis and, 4.82, 4.85; position papers of, 3.483–484, 3.683, 3.694–702, 4.87–89; SVN troop deployments, 4.469, 4.470; on U.S. objectives in SVN, 3.267–268; and Westmoreland, 4.360

Mecklin, John M.: 1.581, 2.243, 2.244, 2.245; during Diem coup, 2.237, 2.246; predictions of, 2.276; view on war, 3.426

Meeker, Leonard: 4.644–4.645

Mendenhall, Joseph: 2.153, 2.158, 2.204; pessimism of, 2.244, 2.246; and Taylor Mission, 2.86. *See also* Krulak-Mendenhall mission

Mendès-France, Pierre (French Premier): 1.114, 1.544; on Diem Government, 1.227–228, 1.229; and Dulles, 1.548, 1.556–557; and Geneva Conference (1954), 1.552–553, 1.566, 1.567–568; on Indochina War, 1.562; meeting with Chou En-lai, 1.537–538, on partition, 1.135–136; Vietnamese elections and, 1.538; Vietnam policy of, 1.541, 1.542, 1.548–549

Menon, Krishna: 1.562

Merchant, Livingston: on U.S. position at Geneva Conference, 1.117

Metcalf, Sen. Lee: 2.830

Miller, Sen. Jack: member Stennis committee, 4.197

Minh, Gen. Duong Van ("Big Minh"): 1.257, 2.165, 2.192, 2.235, 2.272, 2.280, 2.319, 2.341, 2.355, 2.402, 2.498, 2.706, 2.707, 2.767, 3.35; on Diem Government, 2.747; during Diem overthrow, 2.206–207, 2.237, 2.238, 2.239, 2.240, 2.247, 2.256, 2.257, 2.258, 2.260, 2.264, 2.269, 2.790; demotion of, 2.334; as figurehead, 2.309; government of, 3.31; and High National Council, 2.340; on Khanh government, 2.333; and Lodge, 2.768; on neutralization, 3.32; popularity of, 3.41; as President and Chief of Military Committee, 2.271, 2.303; removal of, 3.84; meeting with Taylor, 2.100, 2.101, U.S. relations with, 3.58

Minh, Ho Chi. *See* Ho Chi Minh

Minh, Gen. "Little": and joint command, 2.478

Minh, Gen. Trinh: 1.578

Mohr, Charles: 2.554, 2.558, 2.559, 2.592

Mollet, Guy (French Premier): 1.183

Molotov, V. M.: on Geneva Accords, 1.158; at Geneva Conference (1954), 1.520–522, 1.534–537, 1.545, 1.549, 1.559, 1.560, 1.564–565; on Laos and Cambodia, 1.138; Mendès-France Government and, 1.563

Momyer, Gen. William W.: 4.195

Monroney, Sen. A. S. (Mike): 3.263

Morgenthau, Hans J.: "America's Stake in Vietnam," 3.742; on Vietnam elections, 1.288

Morris, Thomas D.: on manpower requirements, 4.313, 4.317

Morse, Sen. Wayne: 3.263

Mountbatten, Adm. Lord Louis: 1.11, 1.16, 1.18

Moutet, Marius: 1.29, 1.30; and French-DRV negotiations, 1.23, 1.24

Moyers, William: SVN political crisis and, 4.82

Mundt, Sen. Karl E.: and Rusk, 4.588

Murrow, Edward R.: 2.741

Mustin, Vice Adm. L. M.: 3.213, 3.632; on Chinese intervention, 3.218

My-Diem (American-Diem): 1.252, 1.265. *See also* Diem, Ngo Dinh

Nassar, Gamel Abdel: Vietnam negotiations and, 4.94

Navarre, Gen. Henri: 1.78, 1.104, 1.405, 1.416, 1.445. *See also* Navarre Plan

Nehru, Jawaharlal: 1.148, 1.501

Nelson, Sen. Gaylord: 3.187

Nes, David (Deputy Amb. to SVN): 2.310, 2.365, 2.759

Nhu, Madame: 2.70, 2.224, 2.225, 2.724, 2.737, 2.759; Buddhist crisis and, 2.227, 2.228–230; removal of, 2.239–240, 2.242, 2.247, 2.254; rumors about, 2.634; in U.S., 2.252

Nhu, Ngo Dinh: 2.26, 2.674, 2.742; during Diem coup, 2.266, 2.268; assassination of, 2.158, 2.189, 2.207, 2.270,

3.17; Buddhist crisis and, 2.202, 2.227, 2.228, 2.230; on Diem's personalism, 1.301; McNamara-Taylor report on, 2.759; pagoda raids of, 2.202–203, 2.232, 2.234, 2.236 (*see also* Pagoda raids); power of, 2.224, 2.252; power bid of, 2.733; proposed assassination of, 2.767; relations with U.S., 2.225, 2.732, 2.734, 2.740; removal of, 2.239–240, 2.242, 2.244, 2.245, 2.247, 2.249, 2.250, 2.253–254, 2.256; repressive policies of, 2.204; and Republican Youth, 1.311; Strategic Hamlet Program and, 2.129–130, 2.131, 2.145, 2.148, 2.225, 2.685, 2.700, 2.707, 2.723; surrender of, 2.268–269; totalitarianism of, 2.759. *See also* Diem family; Ngo family; Nhu family
Nitze, Paul T. (Deputy Sec. of Defense): 2.74, 4.260, 4.267, 4.313, 4.587; advice to LBJ, 4.592
Niven, Paul: 4.669
Nixon, Richard M.: 1.104, 2.21, 4.361
Nkrumah, Kwame: Vietnam negotiations and, 4.94
Nolting, Frederick E. ("Fritz") (Amb. to SVN): 1.269, 2.2–4, 2.12, 2.32, 2.34, 2.65, 2.86, 2.115, 2.125–126, 2.142, 2.152, 2.165, 2.202, 2.450; and Diem coup, 2.231, 2.238, 2.241, 2.244; August Plot and, 2.741; authority of, 2.444; and Buddhist crisis, 2.229–230, 2.728–729; cables from, 2.81–82, 2.84, 2.99, 2.100–101, 2.102, 2.105–106, 2.120, 2.139; and Diem, 2.52, 2.55, 2.71, 2.147, 2.228–229, 2.450, 2.665, 2.728–729, 3.24; early Vietnam commitment and, 2.16–17; President Kennedy and, 2.444, 2.728
Nosavan, Gen. Phoumi: 2.6, 2.47, 2.55, 3.580
Novak, Robert: 2.610
Nu, U: 1.148

Oanh: as Economic Minister, 2.310, 2.316–318; as Vice Premier, 2.327, 2.353
O'Daniel, Lt. Gen. John W. (Iron Mike): 1.96, 1.215, 1.410, 1.434, 1.444–445, 1.541, 1.574, 1.581; at Geneva Conference, 1.516–517; head of MAAG, 1.77; on Navarre Plan, 1.81; status of, 1.447–448

Parker, Jameson: 1.599–600
Paul VI (Pope): 4.228
Pearson, Lester: cease-fire proposal of, 4.94–95
Peers, Maj. Gen.: 2.539
Persons, Gen. Wilton B.: 2.635
Phat, Gen. Lam Van: coup attempt of, 2.354, 3.88
Phillips, Rufus: 2.243, 2.245–246, 2.539
Phuoc, Lt. Col.: 3.26
Pignon, Leon: 1.57, 1.368
Pike, Douglas: on NLF, 1.345–346, 2.274; on Tho, 1.344; on VC strategy, 1.337
Pineau, Christian: 1.183–184, 1.241, 1.286
Pleven, René: 1.64
Poats, Rutherford: 2.539
Porter, William J. (Deputy Amb. to SVN): 2.387, 2.516, 2.520, 2.607; authority of, 2.518, 2.536, 2.562–564, 2.593; economic program of, 2.396; on inflation in Vietnam, 4.338; on Komer proposals, 2.575; limitations on, 2.565–566, 2.612; and OCO, 2.520, 2.612; on pacification program, 1.590; and Revolutionary Development, 2.485–486, 2.562–564, 2.603; and Rusk, 2.605; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539, 2.540

Quang, Gen.: 2.384, 2.391
Quang, Tri: 3.261
Quang, Trich Tri: 2.236, 2.370–371; U.S. relations of, 2.375–376, 2.781, 4.587
Quat, Phan Huy: 1.225, 2.278, 2.354, 2.356–357, 2.361; on alternative to Diem, 1.233; on bombing pause, 3.368; as Defense Minister, 1.163, during Diem coup, 2.260; generals and, 3.435, on national unity, 3.324; overthrow of, 2.361, 3.434; as prime minister, 3.433–434; U.S. support of, 3.19

Raborn, Adm. William: bombing policy of, 3.364–365; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539
Radford, Adm. Arthur W. (Chairman, JCS): 1.97, 1.411, 1.443, 1.444, 1.446, 1.448–451, 1.458, 1.511, 1.515; on Dien Bien Phu, 1.100; memo to President, 1.459–460; on status of Gen. O'Daniel, 1.447–448
Radharrishnon: 4.94
Ramadier, Premier Paul: 1.4, 1.23, 1.30; on French-DRV negotiations, 1.24–25
Raphael-Laygues, Jacques: 1.222

Rather, Dan: on Tuesday luncheons, 4.209–210
Reasoner, Harry: 4.635
Redick: 2.38
Reischauer, Edmund: before Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4.454
Resor, Stanley R.: 4.512
Reston, James: 2.73, 2.117, 4.643, 4.674; attacks U.S. policy in SVN, 4.98–99
Revers, Gen. Georges: on Bao Dai solution, 1.59
Rhee, Pres. Syngman: 2.46
Rice, Edward E.: 4.161, 4.171, 4.475
Richards, Robert: 1.597
Richardson, John: 2.206, 2.233, 2.235, 2.784; during Diem coup, 2.237, 2.238, 2.240, 2.346, 2.735–736; recall of, 2.254; relationship with Diem, 3.24
Ridgway, Gen. Matthew B.: 1.92, 4.267; advice to LBJ, 4.591; military report on Indochina, 1.127
Rivers, Mendel: 3.35
Robertson, Walter F.: 1.215, 1.447; address on Vietnam, 1.610–613; on all-Vietnam elections, 1.246
Rockefeller, Nelson: 2.21
Roderick, John: 1.581
Ronning, Chester: 4.104; on negotiations, 4.94–95
Roosevelt, Pres. Franklin D.: 1.10; on liberation of Indochina, 1.11; on neutralizing Indochina, 1.8–9; trusteeship for colonial territories, 1.13–14; trusteeship for Indochina, 1.1–2, 1.10
Rostow, Walt W.: 2.4, 2.21, 2.41, 2.42, 2.442, 4.392; advice to LBJ, 4.592; bombing policy of, 4.100–101, 4.476; on Diem, 2.126; on Green Berets, 2.51; on internal GVN problems, 2.310–311; memos to JFK, 2.7, 2.34–35, 2.39; memos to McNamara, 3.632–633; military recommendations of, 3.235; on NSC Working Group, 3.234; San Antonio formula and, 4.262; "Some Observations As We Come to the Crunch in Southeast Asia," 3.645–647; on Taylor Mission, 2.80, 2.84, 2.86, 2.102; in Taylor Report, 2.98, 2.99; on troop commitments, 2.79, 4.469; "Victory and Defeat in Guerrilla Wars," 3.381; Vietnam policy of, 2.31, 4.82, 4.162–165; on wars of liberation strategy, 4.666–667
Rowen, Henry: memo to W. Bundy, 3.642–644; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539
Ruge: 4.684
Rusk, Dean (Sec. of State): 2.5, 2.279, 2.377, 4.267, 4.455; advice to LBJ, 3.176, 4.592; and Diem coup, 2.184, 2.235, 2.739–740; assessment of SVN (1965), 3.296; August Plot and, 2.741; bombing policy of, 3.166–167, 3.727, 4.34, 4.259; cables, 2.105, 3.518, 3.522, 3.524; on Communist China, 3.724; and Dobrynin, 3.274; and Gromyko, 3.377; on Guam Conference, 4.424; at Honolulu Conference, 2.275, 2.323; justification of war, 3.723, 4.661; and Khanh government, 2.323, 2.335, 2.338, 3.67; memos, 2.189, 3.563, 3.577; on negotiations, 3.272, 3.331, 4.95, 4.104, 4.206–207; on neutralization of SVN, 3.712; public statements of, 2.819–821, 3.711, 4.236–237, 4.631–632, 4.635, 4.648–649, 4.653–655, 4.660, 4.662–663, 4.664–665, 4.665–666, 4.669–671, 4.671, 4.680–682, 4.682–684; on Ronning mission, 4.104; on San Antonio formula, 4.237; on SEATO obligations, 4.98; and Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4.263, 4.588, 4.640–644, 4.651; on Tonkin Gulf incident, 3.721; on U.S. aid to Indochina, 1.194–195; Vietnam policy of, 3.65–66, 3.163, 3.729, 3.733–736, 4.23; Vietnam visit, 3.65; and Warrenton Conference, 2.539; on withdrawal, 3.717–718
Russell, Sen. Richard B.: 4.98, 4.586, 4.588

Sagatelyan, Mikhail: 3:375–376
Sainteny, Jean: 1.222, 4.95. *See also* Sainteny Mission
Salinger, Pierre: 3.375
Salisbury, Harrison: dispatches from DRV, 4.388; on DRV civilian casualties, 4.135
Sang, Lai Van: 1.231
San Juan, Johnny "Frisco": 2.647
Sarit Thanarit, Field Marshal: 2.56, 2.645; pro-Western policy of, 2.59
Sartre, Jean-Paul: 3.354
Sary, Foreign Minister Sam: 1.154
Scali, John: 4.631
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr.: 2.42, 2.117; on Diem coup, 2.235; on McNamara-Taylor Mission, 2.248
Scranton, Governor William: 2.537
Schuman, Robert (French Foreign Minister): 1.371
Seaborn, J. Blair: 3.163–164, 3.182,

3.292, 3.330, 3.380; 3.628; and Tonkin Gulf Crisis, 3.519–521
Serong, Col.: 2.528
Shaplen, Robert: 2.499; and Diem coup, 2.257, 2.266; on Viet Minh terrorism, 1.334
Sharp, Adm. U.S. Grant: 3.318, 4.312; bombing policy of, 4.33, 4.38, 4.49, 4.76, 4.103, 4.187, 4.195, 4.208, 4.229; on escalation, 4.26; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; on mining of Haiphong harbor, 4.415; opposes anti-infiltration barrier, 4.123; on ROLLING THUNDER, 4.39–40
Sheehan, Neil: 4.512, 4.585
Showers, Ray: 4.614
Sihanouk, Prince Norodom: 2.708; on NVA/VC sanctuaries, 4.516
Siho, Lt. Col.: 2.646
Smith, Hedrick: 4.585
Smith, Sen. Margaret Chase: 4.197
Smith, Maj. Gen. Paul: 2.605
Smith, Capt. Richard: 1.577
Smith, Gen. Walter Bedell (Under Sec. of State): 1.90, 1.94, 1.113, 1.443, 1.447, 1.551, 2.808; on Geneva Accords, 1.176; cables from Geneva Conference of, 1.519–521, 1.532–533, 1.534–537, 1.559–560, 1.560–561, 1.566–567, 1.567–568, 1.569–570; at Geneva Conference, 1.120, 1.534–537, 1.548; on ICC, 1.177; public statement of, 1.598; on SEATO protection for Cambodia, 1.160–161
So, Huynh Phu: 1.294
Soai, Tran Van: 1.294, 1.303
Solbert, Peter (Dep. Asst. Sec. of Defense): 3.87, 3.641
Sorenson, Theodore: 2.4, 2.62, 2.104, 2.117, 4.674
Souphanouvong: 3.197
Souvanna Phouma (Prime Minister of Laos): 2.78–79, 2.119, 2.195, 3.182, 3.197, 3.260, 4.444, 4.582, 4.673; on bombing supply lines, 3.515–517; government of, 2.112; internal position of, 3.525, 3.528–529, 3.534; negotiating posture of, 3.198; President Kennedy's support of, 2.6; support of U.S. reconnaissance flights, 3.253; U.S. position in Laos and, 3.541, 3.547; Pathet Lao and, 1.395
Spaak, Paul Henri: 1.621
Spera: 2.237
Spivak, Robert G.: 1.597, 4.236
Springstein, George: 2.728–729
Staley, Eugene: 2.11, 2.63, 2.106
Stalin, Joseph V.: 1.1, 1.10
Starbird, Lt. Gen. Alfred: as barrier project manager, 4.124; Laos corridor and, 4.444
Steadman, John M.: 4.315; policy review of, 4.550
Steadman, Richard: 4.443–444
Steeves, John: 2.35
Stennis, Sen. John: 4.299, 4.385; on bombing intensification, 4.527; on escalation, 4.197–205; support of Westmoreland's troop requests, 4.401, 4.456. *See also* Stennis Hearings
Stettinius, E. R., Jr. (Sec. of State): 1.2, 1.11, 1.15; on aid to Indochina, 1.12; statement on postwar trusteeship, 1.14–15
Stevens, Robert T. (Sec. of the Army): on military aid to Indochina, 1.508–509
Stevenson, Adlai: justification of U.S. policy in SVN, 3.715; on NVN aggression, 3.727–728; on Southeast Asia policy, 3.171
Stilwell, Lt. Gen. Richard G.: 2.253, 2.267, 2.783
Stratton, Rep. Samuel S.: 3.36
Sukarno: 3.267
Sullivan, William H. (U.S. Amb. to Laos): 2.280, 2.333, 2.538, 3.77, 3.258, 4.444; memos on Vietnam, 2.319, 2.324–325, 3.594–596; on mining DRV harbors, 4.173
Suu, Phan Khac: 2.277–278, 2.280, 2.347, 2.353, 2.354, 2.355, 2.361, 3.89
Symington, Sen. Stuart: 4.197

Tac, Pham Cong (Cao Dai pope): 1.305. *See also* Cao Dai
Tam, Nguyen Van: 1.225; as Premier of SVN, 1.397, 3.394
Tanh, Tran Chanh (head of GVN Dept. of Information and Youth): 1.311
Taylor, Gen. Maxwell G. (Chairman of JCS and Amb. to SVN): 2.4, 2.14, 2.79, 2.280, 2.281, 2.320, 3.203, 3.274, 4.267, 4.527; advises LBJ, 4.591; against 7-point message, 2.358; ambassadorial authority of, 3.79–80; August Plot and, 2.741; bombing policy of, 2.354, 3.6, 3.93, 3.115, 3.179, 3.209–210, 3.241, 3.262, 3.271–272, 3.334–335, 3.364, 4.96–97; Buddhist crisis and, 2.205, 4.86; cables, 2.85, 2.87, 2.88–90, 2.102, 2.103, 2.105, 2.523, 3.445–447, 3.522–524, 3.566–

Taylor, Gen. Maxwell G.: (*cont'd*) 568; cables to President Kennedy, 2.90; cables to Rusk, 3.576, 3.704; Diem coup and, 2.235, 2.238, 2.241, 2.259; disagreement with JCS, 3.172; on disengagement from Vietnam, 3.295; dispatch to Bundy, 3.103–104; on enclave strategy, 3.453; on escalation, 3.95, 3.110–111, 3.241, 4.26–27; 41 points of, 2.357; on "graduated reprisals," 3.315–318; on ground troops, 2.118, 3.457; and Hop Tac Program, 2.521, 2.523–524; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; and Huong, 3.258; on infiltration, 3.207–208; and Khanh government, 2.326–329, 2.333, 2.336–338, 2.339, 2.341, 2.348, 2.352, 2.499, 3.80, 3.82, 3.87, 3.191, 3.240, 3.260, 3.268, 3.295, 3.530–533, 3.675; and Ky, 2.363; on Laos, 3.189; letter to Diem, 2.185–186; leverage policy of, 2.479; Lodge replaces, 2.365; on logistic deployment, 3.449–450; memo to McNamara, 3.496–499; on military situation, 2.198–199, 3.240, 3.345, 3.471, 3.675; military strategy of, 2.135, 2.137, 3.396; and NSC Working Group, 3.290; on negotiations, 4.95–97, 4.148; optimism on military situation of, 3.436–437; on pacification, 2.493–494, 2.527; phase-out policy and, 2.160; on Phase Two operations, 3.264–265; and policy changes, 3.104; position papers of, 3.363, 3.666–673, 4.247–250; and Principals' Group, 3.239–248; and Quat government, 3.421; relations with JCS, 3.590–591; on search and destroy strategy, 3.396; on sending U.S. forces to Vietnam, 2.90–91; "Three Principles" of, 3.241; on troop buildup, 2.430, 3.455–456, 3.472; on troop deployment, 3.418, 3.445–447, 3.451; on USG-GVN cooperation, 3.241; Vietnam options of, 4.554–555; Vietnam visits of, 2.705, 2.745, 2.805, 2.823, 3.47; and Vietnamese command problem, 2.659, *See also* McNamara-Taylor Mission

Thanat Khouman: 3.257

Thang, Gen. Nguyen Duc: at Honolulu Conference, 2.550; as Vietnamese Minister for RD, 2.354–355, 2.365, 2.392–393, 2.479, 2.486, 2.568, 2.619, 4.388

Thang, Ton Duc: 1.172

Thant, U: 2.322, 2.399; peace proposals of, 3.331, 3.347, 4.94–95, 4.388

Thao, Col. Phamh Ngoc: 2.240, 2.354; and Diem coup, 2.264, 2.266, 2.269; and Khanh coup, 3.325

Thi, Gen. Nguyen Chanh: 2.287, 2.364, 2.369, 3.88, 4.93; Buddhist uprisings against Ky and, 4.101; dismissal of, 2.369–370, 4.78; DMZ operations of, 2.290; as Ky's rival, 2.369; as Young Turk, 2.346

Thieu, Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van (President of SVN): 2.392, 4.579, 4.598; and Diem coup, 2.237; as Chief of State, 3.434; at Guam Conference, 4.424; on joint command, 2.477, 2.478; pacification and, 4.353; and Struggle Movement, 2.285; U.S. support of, 4.577; Vietnamese elections and, 4.480; as Young Turk, 2.346

Tho, Nguyen Ngoc (Vice Pres. and Premier of SVN): 2.28, 2.29, 2.94, 2.207, 2.227, 2.235, 2.249, 2.303, 2.634, 2.704, 2.706, 2.707, 2.716, 2.733, 2.787; and Buddhists, 2.229, 2.306; negotiations with Gen. Minh, 2.270; post-Diem role of, 2.260, 2.270, 2.272; as Premier, 2.271

Tho, Nguyen Nuu (First Chairman of the NLF): 1.339; political background of, 1.344

Thompson, Amb. Llewellyn: 3.691, 4.167, 4.257; on mining of Haiphong harbor, 4.147; and negotiations, 4.272, 4.598; on Soviet reaction to escalation, 4.246–247

Thompson, Sir Robert G. K.: 2.129, 2.153, 2.225, 2.528, 2.674, 2.688, 2.700, 4.161, 4.171, 4.332; proposal of, 2.139–140, 2.142, 2.144

Throckmorton, Gen. John L. (Deputy COMUCMACV): 2.475, 3.417

Thuan, Nguyen Dinh: 2.28–29, 2.34, 2.60, 2.66, 2.67, 2.240, 2.247, 2.253, 2.254, 2.255, 2.674, 2.679, 2.707; and Buddhist crisis, 2.229, 2.234; requests U.S. troops, 2.81–82; and Taylor Mission, 2.86, 2.102

Thuc, Ngo Dinh: 1.253, 2.226, 2.240, 2.242. *See also* Diem family; Ngo family

Thue, Dean Vu Quoc: 2.106

Thurmond, Sen. Strom: 4.197, 4.233–234

Tieu, Lt. Col. Ho: 3.539

Tillson, Maj. Gen.: on pacification, 2.587, 2.608

Tito, Josip Broz: 3.347

Ton, (Minister): at Honolulu Conference, 2.550

Topping, Seymour: 1.155, 1.157, 1.561, 1.566
Trapnell, Gen. J. H.: 1.122, 1.234, 1.445; at Geneva Conference, 1.516–518; on Indochina, 1.487–499
Trevelyn, (UK Amb. to Moscow): 3.326
Tri, Gen. Do Cao: 2.260, 2.264
Tri, Nguyen Huu: 1.394
Trinh, Nguyen Duy (DRV Foreign Minister): 3.380, 4.233
Truehart, William C.: 2.152, 2.202, 2.224, 2.230, 2.263; and Diem coup, 2.237, 2.246, 2.256, 2.793
Truman, Pres. Harry S: 1.2, 1.6, 1.18, 1.64; on aid to Indochina, 1.373, 1.590; on military aid to Asian countries, 1.590; public statements of, 1.588–589; special message to Congress, 1.589–591
Tu, Lai: 2.106
Tung, Col. Le Van: 2.233, 2.736, 2.753, 3.821; role in Diem overthrow, 2.238, 2.253, 2.267; Special Forces of, 2.232, 2.234, 2.250, 2.251, 2.253, 2.254, 2.265, 2.266, 2.734, 2.762; surrender of, 2.268–269
Tuyen, Tran Kim: 2.237, 2.634, 2.759

Ung, Nguyen Tat (SVN Minister of RD): 2.365
Unger, Gen. F. T.: 3.510
Unger, Leonard (Dep. Asst. Sec. of State for Far Eastern Affairs): at Honolulu Conference, 2.533; negotiation policy of, 4.83–84; position papers of, 3.731, 4.649–650; on U.S. commitment to SVN, 4.91; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539
U Nu. *See* Nu, U
U Thant. *See* Thant, U

Valenti, Jack: 2.54, 2.549
Valeriano, Col. Napoleon: 1.582
Valluy, Gen.: 1.443; on military situation in Indochina, 1.122; on military situation in Tonkin Delta, 1.518–519; public statement of, 1.521
Vance, Cyrus R.: (Dep. Sec. of Defense): 4.267, 4.313, 4.497; on air war, 4.191; advice to LBJ, 4.591; Buddhist crisis and, 4.82; on B-52 strikes, 3.333–334; and JCS, 4.405; memo on maritime operations, 3.571
Van Fleet, Gen. James A.: 1.155
Vann, John Paul: 2.520, 2.613, 2.620
Vien, Le Van (Bay): 1.220, 1.293. *See also* Binh Xuyen
Vien, Gen. Cao Van (SVN Minister of Interior): 2.340, 2.395; and pacification, 2.493
Vincent, John Carter: 1.29
Vy, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van: 1.235, 1.575, 2.393

Walt, Gen. Lewis W.: 2.374, 2.375, 2.534; pacification and, 2.515, 2.536
Warner, LTC Volney: 2.404, 2.503
Warnke, Paul (Asst. Sec. of Defense): 4.568; on bombing, 4.225; and JCS, 4.216, 4.235–236; on negotiations with Hanoi, 4.264; policy review of, 4.550; on target list revision, 4.204–205
Webb, James (Acting Sec.): 1.370
Welles, Sumner: 1.8–9
Westmoreland, Gen. William C.: 2.280, 2.395, 2.468, 3.4, 4.379; on anti-infiltration measures, 4.334, 4.412–413; bombing policy of, 3.383, 4.31, 4.33, 4.39, 4.49, 4.101, 4.130–131, 4.207; cable to CINCPAC, 3.470, 4.606–609; Combined Command Plan of, 4.554; *Commander's Estimate of the Situation in South Vietnam,* 3.345; and CORDS, 2.516; deployment of Marines and, 3.430; on destruction of enemy bases, 4.402; on enemy sanctuaries, 4.336–338; on enemy strategy, 4.403–406; escalation and, 4.26; "Force Requirements and Deployments," 4.606–609; on forcing negotiations, 4.296; "44-Battalion" request of, 2.474, 2.547, 3.467; ground troop recommendations, 3.389, 3.417, 3.462–468; at Guam Conference, 4.424; on holiday truce, 4.141; at Honolulu Conference, 2.323, 2.324, 3.173, 3.358, 4.312; and Hop Tac Program, 2.516, 2.521, 2.526; on joint US-ARVN command, 2.357, 2.476–477; and Khanh gov't, 2.317, 2.319, 2.326, 2.335; on Komer proposals, 2.575; Laos policy of, 2.327; and LBJ, 2.561, 4.588; at Manila Conference, 4.130–131; message #19118 of, 3.462, 3.467; military objectives of, 4.530, 4.569; on military situation, 2.337–338, 2.474, 3.89–90, 3.337, 3.345–346, 3.438–439, 3.675, 4.336–338, 4.426, 4.434; mobility defense strategy of, 4.386; on objectives of U.S. forces in Vietnam, 4.301; on OCO, 2.614; on 173rd for Security, 3.450–452; on pacification, 2.519, 2.574, 2.597, 2.605; on Phase II re-

Westmoreland, Gen. William C.: (*cont'd*) quirements, 4.305–308; on piaster limits, 4.344; and Program 5, 4.531; public defense of war, 4.217; on Quat government, 3.424; recall of, 4.269, 4.593; on relationship between US/Allied forces and RVNAF, 3.459; review of war effort with LBJ, 4.441–443; on RD requirements, 2.588, 2.609, 4.330–331; ROLLING THUNDER and, 4.39; strategy of anticipation, 4.516; strong position of, 2.281, 2.288; support of ARVN, 2.500; on troop build-up, 2.471; on troop deployments, 2.353–363, 3.470–471, 3.440; on troop level requirements, 2.282, 2.357, 4.108, 4.154, 4.238, 4.326–327, 4.360, 4.427–431, 4.548–549, 4.560, 4.575, 4.580, 4.584, 4.586. *See also* COMUS; COMUSMACV
Westy: see Westmoreland, Gen. William C.
Weyand, Gen. Frederick: 2.603
Wheeler, Gen. Earle G. (Chairman, JCS): 3.64, 3.320, 3.630, 3.640, 4.129, 4.211, 4.254, 4.267, 4.363, 4.497, 4.498; advice to LBJ, 4.592; bombing policy of, 3.193, 4.49, 4.66, 4.75, 4.151, 4.152–153, 4.159–160, 4.215; on escalation, 4.26; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; on JCSM 97-67, 4.414; memo to McNamara, 3.639; optimism of 4.290; on strategic reserves, 4.487; support of JCS policies, 3.238, 4.177–178; Vietnam visit of, 3.64, 4.546; on Westmoreland's troop requirements, 4.238; on worldwide military situation, 4.442
White, Theodore: 2.12, 2.70
Wicker, Tom: 2.558
Wiesner, Dr. Jerome: 4.115
Williams, Lt. Edward: 1.577
Williams, Lt. Gen. Samuel T.: 1.577
Wilson, Charles E. (Sec. of Defense): 1.89, 1.215, 1.454
Wilson, Harold (British Prime Minister): on negotiations, 4.143; and POL strikes, 4.102–103; on reconvening Geneva Conference, 4.94
Wilson, Col. Jasper J.: 2.481, 2.522, 3.37
Wilson, Col. Sam: 2.399; appointment of, 2.563; on VC in the Delta, 4.444
Wittmayer, Lt. Col. Raymond: 1.577
Wood, Chalmers B.: on Buddhist crisis, 2.728–729; and Task Force on Vietnam, 2.643
Wright, Col. Amos: 1.508–509

Y, Col. Nguyen Van. *See* Yankee, Col. Nguyen Van
Yankee, Col. Nguyen Van: 2.28, 2.679, 2.707
Yarmolinsky, Adam: 4.115
Young, Kenneth: 1.215, 2.20, 2.125, 3.28

Zacharias, Jerrold: 4.225
Zorthian, Barry: 2.324, 2.327, 2.328, 2.520, 2.528, 2.555; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539; duties of, 2.606
Zwick, Charles J.: 3.87; at Warrenton Conference, 2.539

Subject Index

The Index has two parts: names which appear in volumes I–IV are indexed on pp. 3–20, and subjects discussed in the four volumes are indexed on pp. 21–66. Cross references are made between the two parts as well as within each part. The volume numbers are indicated by arabic numerals 1, 2, 3, and 4 followed by a period; page references follow the period: e.g., 1.88–90.

"Able Mable": 2.178

Accelerated Plan: 2.190–191

Accord of March 6, 1946: 1.3, 1.26

Advisors, U.S.: 2.317; Air Force, 2.513; battalion, 2.454; bilingual, 2.467; from CAS, 2.484, 2.614; differences among, 3.24; dispersement of, 2.412; district, 2.472, 2.479; expansion of, 2.309, 2.319–320; 2.325–326, 2.454, 2.467, 2.471, 2.510–514; extra-bureaucratic, 2.440–441; field, 2.454, 2.499; frustrations of, 2.367; increase in, 3.81, 3.90; Lansdale on, 2.441; Marine, 2.476; naval, 2.513; preparation of, 2.512; Public Safety, 2.614; RF/PF, 2.414; role of (1964), 2.307–308; scientific, 4.111, 4.114, 4.115; sector, 2.479; senior, 2.477–478; Senior Provincial, 2.490; tour of duty, 2.452; types of, 2.454, 2.471; from USIS, 2.484; from USOM, 2.484

Advisory effort, U.S.: assessment of, 2.466, 2.715; chronology of, 2.415–430; concept of, 2.464–465, 2.664; evaluation of, 2.499; expectations of, 2.452–453, 2.456; increase in, 2.464, 2.469–479, 2.512; LBJ announces, 2.475; leverage and, 2.499; Sec. McNamara on, 2.756; organization for, 2.465; and pacification, 2.483; purposes of, 2.475; team concept of, 2.468, 2.490; transition from, 2.461. *See also* Advisory teams, U.S.

Advisory teams, U.S.: 2.490, 2.513, 2.547, 2.573; battalion level military, 2.451

Advisory warfare: 2.474

Agency for International Development (AID): 2.7, 2.152, 2.190, 2.198, 2.279, 3.27; advisors, 2.724; commodities as leverage, 2.374, 2.379, 2.383; and counterinsurgency, 2.668, 2.682–683; Country Assistance Program (CAP) of, 2.566; direct support commodities of, 2.286; funding of, 2.275, 2.326, 2.397; funds from, 2.363, 2.364, 2.367; inflation and, 4.341–342; Komer's influence on, 2.568; loans to Diem regime, 2.250; misuse of funds, 2.366, 2.391; and mobilization, 3.59; OCO and, 2.612; and pacification program, 2.528, 2.590; in Panama, 2.669; Police Field Force of, 2.586; Amb. Porter and, 2.564, 2.565; Public Health Chief in Saigon in, 2.551; Public Safety Division of, 2.720; reorganization of (1966), 2.606; and roles and missions study, 2.585; and U.S. control of commodities, 2.306. *See also* International Cooperation Administration (ICA)

"Aggression from the North" (State White Paper): 2.311

Agrarian reform. *See* Land reform

"Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam": 1.289. *See also* Geneva Accords

Agricultural Credit: 2.676
Agriculture: 2.554; pilot-projects in, 2.640. *See also* Countryside
Agro-hamlet: 2.134
Agrovilles: 2.24, 2.133; failure of, 1.256, 2.133–134; peasant resistance to, 1.313; VC disruption of, 1.338
AID. *See* Agency for International Development
Aid, economic: to Associated States, 1.370, 1.378; increase in, 2.318; as leverage, 2.285–287, 2.304, 2.316; 2.742, 2.747; for provinces, 2.325; resumption of, 2.271, 2.273, 2.275; suspension of, 2.205–206, 2.236, 2.238, 2.242, 2.244, 2.253
Aid, medical: 2.551
Aid, military: 2.717; as leverage, 2.54, 2.742. *See also* Advisory effort; War effort
"Aims and Options in Southeast Asia": 3.580–583
Airborne Division, 82nd: 4.540–544, 4.584
Airborne Division, 101st: 4.435, 4.528; deployment of, 4.529, 4.531–532; transfer of, 4.569
Airborne operations: 3.607
Aircraft: 2.179, 2.195; artillery-spotter, 2.181; French, 1.403; jet, 2.546; MIG, 3.335, 3.536, 3.547; in SVN (1962), 2.657; transport, 2.114; T-28s, 2.195
Aircraft losses: credibility gap and, 4.455; under Program 4, 4.383
Aircraft mechanics: lack of, 1.444
Air Force, French: 1.402–403; cost of, 1.408; in Indochina, 1.494; organization of, 1.494; in Tonkin, 1.399
Air Force, Royal Laotian: 3.253
Air Force, U.S.: 3.638; and bombing plan, 4.186 (*see also* Air operations; Air strikes; Air war; Bombing); and reserve call-up, 4.545; study on role of air and ground forces, 3.549–550; in support of French Union Forces, 1.514
Air Force, Vietnamese (VNAF): aircraft, exchange of, 3, 4; evolution of, 2.180; pilot training program in, 3.69–70; politics and, 2.688; reorganization of, 2.176; Saigon bombing threat of, 2.338; size of, 2.656; threatened attack on ARVN, 2.375; training of, 2.333; U.S. aid to, 3.54
Air Force Advisory Group: 2.513
Air France: 1.444
Airlift: Soviet, 2.77–78; U.S., 2.107, 2.114, 2.179, 2.289, 2.656
Air National Guard: 4.545; reserve units of, 4.544
Air operations: clandestine, 2.648. *See also* Air strikes; Air war
Air strikes: 2.328, 3.167, 3.179, 3.208, 3.245, 3.288, 3.299–300, 3.342, 3.706; McG. Bundy on, 3.351; direct support of, 2.722; estimated Communist reaction to, 3.206; expansion of targets, 2.285; graduated, 3.265; and Hanoi's will, 3.269, 4.56, 4.475; increase in 3.338; initiation of, 3.5; interagency study on, 3.154–155; JCS on, 4.357; justification of, 3.272, 4.51; and Laotian crisis, 3.165; on Laotian infiltration routes, 3.297, 3.558; McCone on, 3.364; objectives of, 3.269, 3.349, 3.697; probable Communist response to, 3.215, 3.692–693; probable effectiveness of, 2.722, 3.295, 4.133–136; Raborn on, 3.365; risks of, 3.350, 3.698; Amb. Taylor on, 3.335–336, 3.364; 12-week program, 3.343–344. *See also* Air operations; Air war; Bombing
Air war: alternative programs for, 4.189–190; chronology of, 4.1–16; escalation of, 4.21-32; JCS strategy for, 4.179; losses in, 4.475; midsummer 1965, 4.18–21; predicted international response to, 4.500; strategic weakness of, 4.119–120. *See also* Air operations; Air strikes; Bombing; ROLLING THUNDER
Alliance for Progress: 2.815, 2.830
Allies, U.S.: 1.424, 3.174, 3.249, 3.290, 3.478, 3.485, 3.658, 3.681; anti-Soviet, 1.419–420, 1.424–425; consultations with, 3.257–258; ground combat forces of, 3.257–258, 3.459, 3.460, 4.470; and JCS, 3.258; need for, 3.249–250; notification of air strikes, 3.116–117; operational performance of, 4.376; support of, 3.182
All-Union Communist Party: 1.428
All-Vietnam elections. *See* Elections, all-Vietnam; Unification
"Alternative to Air Attacks on North Vietnam for the Use of U.S. Ground Forces in Support of Diplomacy in Vietnam": 3.427
"Alternative Courses of Action in Southeast Asia": 4.494–497
"Amalgamation": concept of, 1.594
Ambassadorship: PROVN views on, 2.577
Americanization: of war, 2.478, 4.564

Amnesty program: 2.721. *See also* Chieu Hoi Program
"Anh Dung" operation: 3.539–540
An Hoa Army post: Viet Cong attack on, 2.679
Annam: 1.18, 1.291
Anti-Americanism: in South Vietnam, 2.282, 2.289, 2.312, 2.360, 2.372, 2.377–378
Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign: 1.311, 1.324–325. *See also* Diem government; anti-Communist campaign of
Anti-corruption campaign: in SVN, 4.578; PRACTICE NINE Requirements Plan for, 4.412
Anti-infiltration: JCS on, 4.413–414
Anti-infiltration barrier. *See* Barrier, anti-infiltration
Anti-vehicle system: 4.121–122
Anti-war demonstration, Oct. 27, 1967; 4.217
Anti-war pressures: 4.98
An Xuyen Province: 3.26–27
ANZUS: 1.106; and intervention, 1.522; Treaty, 4.683. *See also* Allies, U.S.
Ap Bac, battle of: 2.456, 2.718
Ap Chien Luoc. See Strategic Hamlet Program
Ap Doi Moi (Real New Life Hamlets): 2.621–622
Arab-Israeli War of 1967: 4.187
Arc Light: 3.383–385
Armed Forces Council: 2.346, 2.349, 2.353, 3.92. *See also* Young Turks
Armed reconnaissance operations: 3.199, 3.251; extension of, 4.79; in Laos, 3.254, 3.682; scope of, 4.29; "strangulation program" of, 4.109. *See also* Reconnaissance flights
Armored cavalry: numbers of, 2.513
Armored cavalry regiment: 4.570
Arms factories: 2.698
Army Immediate Ready Reserve: 4.545. *See also* Reserves; Reserve call-up
Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam (ARVN): 2.3, 2.224, 2.475, 3.1, 3.28, 3.30, 4.547; casualties of, 2.774–777; and counterinsurgency, 2.9, 2.46, 4.396; creation of, 2.433; defeats of, 2.412, 2.472–473, 3.6, 3.438; desertion rates of, 2.311, 3.52, 3.501; and Diem gov't, 1.257; dissident units in, 2.375; effectiveness of, 3.434, 4.376–377, 4.399, 4.516, 4.553; expansion of, 2.474–475; family allowance rates for, 2.679; 51st regiment of, 2.473, 2.523; funds for, 2.310; guerrilla training of, 1.269; inadequacy of, 2.473, 2.688, 3.60, 4.298, 4.398–399, 4.562, 4.578; increase in, 2.6–8, 2.10–11, 2.64, 2.313, 2.325, 2.642, 3.505, 3.509; leadership of, 2.475; Amb. Lodge and, 2.605; Sec. McNamara on, 2.313; mobility of, 2.86, 2.89, 2.146; morale of, 4.552; and pacification, 2.140, 2.487, 2.587, 2.597, 3.55, 4.329, 4.351, 4.369, 4.397–398, 4.459; peasants and, 1.306, 2.662; performance of, 2.85, 2.406, 2.500, 3.391–393; political power of, 2.205; problems in, 2.186, 2.301–302, 3.439; and RD, 2.495–498, 2.614, 4.409; reeducation of, 2.394; reform in, 2.596; regular forces of, 2.495; Senior Advisor to, 2.478; and Strategic hamlet program, 2.150, 2.455, 4.376; strength of, 2.182, 2.656, 3.97; training program for, 2.38; UH-1 support of, 4.467; U.S. expectations of, 2.456; U.S. forces and, 2.354–360, 2.604
The Arrogance of Power: 4.402
ARVN. See Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam (ARVN)
ASA. *See* U.S., Army Security Agency of
ASD/ISA. See Department of Defense; ISA
Assassination: VC use of, 2.697, 2.820. *See also* Terrorism
Associated States of Indochina: 1.179, 1.553–554; Communist threat to, 1.587; Franco-American aid to, 1.608–609; French policy toward, 1.558; independence of, 1.437; National Armies in, 1.397; National Guard of, 1.400; political stability in, 1.398; recognition of, 1.377; strength of armies in, 1.400; U.S. economic mission to, 1.370–372; U.S. support of, 1.382–383, 1.387–388; U.S. training of forces, 1.513–515. *See also* Cambodia, Indochina, Laos, Vietnam
Astrology: as psywar technique, 1.582
Asylum: during Diem coup, 2.793
The Atlantic Charter: 1.1, 1.14
"The Atlantic Charter and National Independence": 1.14
Atomic weapons. *See* Nuclear weapons
"A to Z Policy Review": for LBJ, 4.238–258, 4.583, 4.604; military options in, 4.550. *See also* Clifford Group
Attrition: war of, 2.725. *See also* War of attrition
August Plot: 2.740

Austerity program: 4.579
Australia: 3.257; and bombing policy, 4.251; troops in SVN, 4.309, 4.470, 4.524
Australia, New Zealand, United States. See ANZUS
Australian Task Force: 4.325
Auto-Defense Choc units: of FAL, 2.646

B-26: in Franco-Viet Minh War, 1.443-445
B-52: 4.213, 4.535; strikes, 2.493, 4.421
Ba Gia: battle of, 2.361, 2.438
Balance of payments: 2.390, 2.512
Balance of power: 3.741
Baltimore Sun: 2.557
Bao Dai government: key persons in, 1.209; position at Geneva Conf., 1.134; public respect for, 1.368-369; U.S. policy and, 1.53, 1.230. *See also* Bao Dai; Bao Dai solution
Bao Dai solution: 1.3, 1.25, 1.53; State Dept. on, 1.62-63; U.S. policy and, 1.33. *See also* Bao Dai; Bao Dai government
BARREL ROLL: 2.349, 3.92, 3.116, 3.254-255, 3.291, 3.297, 3.316, 3.319, 3.338, 3.697; justification for, 3.95. *See also* Bombing; STEEL TIGER
Barrier, anti-infiltration: 4.120-121, 4.139, 4.335, 4.356; CINCPAC on, 4.336; concept of, 4.112-113, 4.114; estimated cost of, 4.122; JCS on, 4.133; McNamara on, 4.126, 4.349; NVN countermeasures to, 4.122-123. *See also* Infiltration
Bases, U.S.: in SVN, 3.211; in Thailand, 3.575
Bassac River: controls on, 3.551-552
Battalion Landing Team (BLT): 3.390-391
Battalions: construction, 4.473; maneuver, 4.382, 4.521
Ba Xuyen Province: 3.26
Bay of Pigs: 2.2, 2.7, 2.33
Ben Cat District: 2.149
Ben Cat Project. *See* Sunrise, Operation
Ben Thuy Port: 3.298
Ben Tuong Hamlet: 2.149
Berlin: Soviet threats against, 2.2; and Vietnam policy, 2.78, 2.108, 2.112, 2.119, 2.161, 2.174
Berlin Agreement, 1954: 1.507
Berlin Conference, 1954: 1.95, 1.111; and Indochina question, 1.96-97
Bien Hoa Airbase: 2.658; U.S. retaliation, 3.209, 3.291, 3.593, 3.599; VC attack on, 2.341, 3.587
Bien Hoa Province: 2.406-407
Binh Dinh Province: 2.355, 2.685-686, 3.501; and Operation Let's Go, 2.702; success in, 4.435
Binh Duong Province: 2.143-144, 2.148-150, 2.701, 3.501
Binh paramilitary team: 1.582-583
Binh Xuyen, the: 1.183, 1.220; alliance with Viet Minh, 1.293; attacks on Diem gov't, 1.230-231, 1.233-234; defeat of, 1.303; gangster activities of, 1.293; guerrilla activity of, 1.305; territory controlled by, 1.294. *See also* Vien, Le Van (Bay)
Birth rate, Vietnamese, 4.587
Black Market: 2.369
Bloc for Liberty and Progress. *See* Caravelle Group
"Blueprint for National Action": 2.578
"Blueprint for Vietnam": 2.287, 2.403
Board of National Estimates, CIA: 3.178, 3.364; on VC, 4.75-76
Body count: 2.755. *See also* Casualties
Bombing: and allies, 4.251; alternative strategies, 4.163-165; and British, 4.257; Chinese reaction to, 3.175, 4.163; and Clifford Group, 4.250-252; criticism of, 4.30, 4.134-135, 4.217; debate over, 3.108, 3.109-110, 3.237, 3.270, 4.68-71; and DRV morale, 4.117-118, 4.140, 4.147, 4.168, 4.180, 4.201-202, 4.224, 4.232, 4.348; and DRV ability to fight, 4.125, 4.169, 4.201; and DRV willingness to negotiate, 4.58, 4.260; economic effects of, 4.225-232; effect on DRV manpower of, 4.227-228; equation with VC activities, 3.375; evaluation of, 4.592; expansion of, 4.43; and ground war, 4.474-477; and GVN reform, 2.479; and Harris poll, 4.39; ineffectiveness of, 4.68-70, 4.138, 4.223, 4.235, 4.265; infiltration-related targets, 3.199; of infiltration routes, 3.386, 4.68; intensification of, 3.383, 4.49-50, 4.60; and JCS, 3.172-173, 4.254, 4.255-256; of Laos, 2.344, 3.514-515, 4.595; LBJ's reservations on, 3.113; as low risk policy, 4.29; military relevance of, 3.386; as morale booster, 4.161; of NVN, 2.278-279, 2.285, 2.325, 2.329, 2.331, 2.339, 2.353, 3.5-6, 3.45, 3.93, 3.286, 3.324, 3.336, 3.498, 3.503, 3.546, 3.547, 3.551-552, 4.623; opposition to, 3.193-194; in Panhandle,

3.523, 3.524, 3.527, 3.539, 3.577, 4.258; partial suspension of, 4.597; physical consequences of, 4.113; pilot cost of, 4.172; as policy tool, 4.222; and POL supplies, 4.58–106 (*see also* POL supplies); projected, 2.92, 2.96–97, 2.104, 2.106–109, 2.324; projected Sino-Soviet response to, 4.184–185; proposals for suspension, 3.357; psychological impact of, 3.241; psychological objective of, 4.119; public reaction to, 4.559; purposes of, 3.234–235, 3.385, 4.57, 4.140, 4.171, 4.194, 4.230, 4.260; rationale for, 3.385; restrictions on, 4.255–256, 4.270; resumption of, 3.275, 3.378, 4.35, 4.36–53, 4.68, 4.143, 4.220–221; Soviet Union and, 4.163; Stennis subcommittee and, 4.198–199; suspension of, 2.368, 3.357, 4.241, 4.583; SVN reaction to, 3.83, 4.134, 4.167, 4.224, 4.353; target study for, 3.555, 4.135, 4.150; tonnage, 4.216; U.S. policy position on, 3.115–116, 3.177–178; vulnerability of DRV and, 2.14, 4.350; weather, 4.257. *See also* Air operations; Air strikes; Air war; Reprisal actions; ROLLING THUNDER, Operation; Targets

Bombing halt: 4.221–222; DRV response to, 4.266; Goldberg reply, 4.389; ISA and, 4.265–266; north of 20° parallel, 4.269; risk of, 4.219–220; SEACABIN and, 4.222; terms for, 3.247, 3.673; U.S. position on, 4.234; value of, 4.221

Bombing pause, 3.269, 4.67; aftermath of, 3.379–381; announcement of, 3.367–368, 3.369, 3.374; arguments about, 4.32–34, 4.35–36; attempts at, 3.363; and Buddha's birthday, 3.367; first, 3.274, 3.362, 3.366; Hanoi response to, 3.371, 3.372, 3.379, 4.39; "hard-line," 4.37; and Harris poll, 4.39; and Kohler's diplomatic efforts, 3.371; LBJ and, 3.363; objectives of, 4.37; and POL supplies, 4.66–68; pressures for, 3.362–366, 4.303; secrecy about, 3.368; "soft-line," 4.37; termination of, 3.375, 3.378, 4.58

Bombing program: Bundy's recommendations for, 3.351; Chinese reaction to, 4.80; criticisms of, 4.44–46, 4.203; debate over, 3.271, 3.381; de-escalation of, 4.174; effects of, 3.387; failure of, 4.111, 4.112; ineffectiveness of, 4.261; JCS review of, 4.254; McNamara review of, 3.385, 4.200–201; McNaughton review of, 3.349–351, 4.42–46, 4.487; negotiations and, 4.352; options, 3.393; political penalities of, 4.80; predictions for, 3.388, 4.113; purposes of, 4.42, 4.342; success of, 4.229–230. *See also* Targets

Bonze: death of, 2.727. *See also* Buddhist crisis

Border control: improvement of, 3.45. *See also* Barrier; Infiltration

Border Control actions: 2.459; Cambodia, 2.195, 2.459; Laos, 2.195, 2.409

Border incidents: 2.368

Border Patrol: concept of, 3.508–509; U.S. assistance and, 2.50

Border Ranger Force: 2.89

Borders: defense of, 4.538, 4.563; of SVN, 2.76

Brain trust. *See* Advisors, U.S.

Brink Officers Quarters: bombing of, 2.350, 3.262–263

Britain. *See* Great Britain

British Advisory Mission: 2.129, 2.676–700; plan of, 2.139, 2.141, 2.702. *See also* Thompson proposal

Broadcasts: gray, 2.641

Brussels Pact: 1.35

Bucklew Report: 2.198

Buddhist crisis: 2.183–184, 2.200, 2.202, 2.225–232, 2.237, 2.246, 2.252, 2.729–730, 3.20; Diem response to, 2.201, 2.158; effects of, 3.23; Amb. Lodge and, 2.735; in 1963, 2.18, 2.457; in 1964, 2.278; NLF position during, 2.201, 2.274; State Dept. handling of, 2.734; VC reaction to, 2.183; World Federation Inquiry Mission and, 2.745. *See also* Pagoda raids

Buddhists: Anti-Americanism of, 2.289; anti-Ky demonstrations of, 4.78, 4.82; arrests of, 2.203, 2.184, 2.734; attacks on GVN of, 2.279; attempted settlement with, 2.229, 2.230; and Catholic church, 2.730; civil disorders of, 3.60; demands of, 2.334, 2.337, 2.727; demonstrations of, 2.334–335, 2.352, 3.261–262; Diem policy toward, 2.201, 2.744; dissent among, 2.371, embassy asylum for, 2.791; hunger strike of, 2.345; and Huong Government, 3.261; and Khanh government, 3.85–87; oppression of, 2.186, 2.201, 2.252, 2.253, 2.255; political power of, 2.204, 2.285, 4.86; protests of, 2.202, 2.225, 2.370, 2.731; reactions to Thi's dismissal, 2.370; reprisals against, 2.734; rioting of, 2.546; sui-

Buddhists: (*cont'd*)
  cides of, 2.227, 2.228, 2.229, 2.252, 2.376. *See also* Buddhist crisis
Buddhist Struggle Movement: 2.555. *See also* Struggle Movement
Buddy system: 2.604
Budget. *See* Piaster; War effort, financing of
Bui Chu, town of: 1.136
Bundy Working Group: 3.110, 3.112, 3.113, 3.598–601; NSC and, 3.115; proposals of, 3.114–115. *See also* Bundy, William P.
Bureaucracy: Diem and, 2.707–708; problems of, 2.618
Burma: and domino theory, 1.361, 1.373; military aid to, 1.365; rice exports of, 1.385; U.S. economic aid to, 1.440. *See also* Southeast Asia
Burmese Army: 2.646

C-2A observation aircraft: 4.539
C-47 transports: 2.13
C-119 aircraft: 1.446
C-140 jet aircraft: 4.530
Cach Mang Quoc Gia: 1.337
Caltrop (anti-infiltration device): 4.336
Ca Mao: ARVN success in, 2.150
Ca Mau peninsula, 1.306, 2.607
Cambodia: 3.296; Communist threat to, 4.582; and Dien Bien Phu, 1.485; Geneva Conference (1954) and, 1.535; independence of, 1.593; military operations in, 4.535; mountain trail system of, 2.78; neutralism of, 2.225; as NVA supply base, 4.443, 4.479; relations with GVN, 2.305; as sanctuary, 2.142, 2.195, 2.345, 2.368, 3.503, 4.412, 4.492, 4.519, 4.527; U.S. operations in, 4.214
Camp Chinen: 2.649
Cam Pha, port of: 4.205
Camp Holloway: VC attack on, 3.302
Cam Ranh Bay: 3.65, 3.164, 4.131
Canada: 3.257; peace proposal of, 4.195
Can Lao Vi Cach Mang Dang (or *Can Lao*) (Personalist Labor Revolutionary Party): 1.253, 1.302, 2.705, 2.745; disbandment of, 2.634
Can Tho: as site of Viet Minh–Hoa Hao clashes, 1.294–295
Cao Dai: 1.45, 1.220, 1.293–294, 1.578, 2.275, 2.699, 2.709; influence of, 3.495; South Vietnamese nationalism and, 1.43; training of, 2.307, 2.308
CAP. *See* Combined Action Platoon
CAP 63516: 2.743
CAP 63560: 2.769
CAP 63590: 2.261
CAP 74338: 2.258
Cape Palaise: bombardment of, 3.554
Cape Mui Ron: bombardment of, 3.554
Capital Military District Divisions: 2.513
Capital Military Region: 2.482
Caravelle Group: 1.257, 1.316. *See also* Caravelle Manifesto
Caravelle Manifesto: 1.256–257; signatories to, 1.320–321; text, 1.316–321
"Carrot and stick" approach, 3.163, 3.274
CAS: 2.100, 2.574, 3.34, 3.37; Diem coup and, 2.239, 2.738; report of, 2.256; station chief, 3.33. *See also* Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
CAS 74228: 2.261
Case 1 decision: 4.312
Casualties: ARVN, 2.774–777; CG, 2.774–777; enemy, 4.408; SDC, 2.774–777; statistics on, 2.773; U.S., 2.810, 2.827, 4.623. *See also* Killed in action
CAT. *See* Civil Air Transport (CAT)
Catholic Church: 2.226
Catholicism: 2.658
Catholics: in GVN, 2.729, 2.730; as refugees, 2.226
Catholic Youth: 2.721
CDIG. *See* Civilian Irregular Defense Groups
Cease-fire: U.S. acceptance of, 1.448; U.S. opposition to, 1.442, 1.453, 1.475, 1.500. *See also* Bombing pause; Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
Central Highlands: 2.138
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), U.S.: 2.31, 2.282; on aid suspension, 2.253; and bombing, 4.77, 4.139, 4.155, 4.184–185, 4.354; and Buddhist crisis, 2.228; cables to Lodge, 2.769; on Cambodia, 4.414; and Clifford Group, 4.240, 4.242; "Communist Alternatives in Vietnam," 4.551; and counterinsurgency, 2.682 (*see also* Counterinsurgency); on Diem coup, 2.237, 2.246, 2.261, 2.735, 2.736 (*see also* Diem coup); on escalation, 4.64–66, 4.71–74; evaluation of war (1968), 4.550; failure of interdiction and, 4.215; funding for, 2.640; on Hanoi's policies, 4.239, 4.510; JCS planning and, 4.75; on MACV, 2.586; and OCO, 2.612, 2.614; Operation Brotherhood and, 2.648; pacification and, 2.567, 3.442–443; pessimistic estimates of, 4.111, 4.180–181; on POL strikes,

4.103–104; and Dep. Amb. Porter, 2.565; on ROLLING THUNDER, 4.137, 4.354; ship of, 2.649; situation analysis by (1962), 2.684; "Special CAS Group," reports of, 2.194 (*see also* CAS); staff of, 2.644; survey of (1964), 3.32–33, 3.596–597; after Tonkin crisis: 3.205–206
Central Intelligence Organization (SVN): 2.28, 2.89, 2.114
Central Rural Construction Council (CRCC): 2.365
CG. *See* Civil Guard (CG)
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS): on air strikes, 3.334; memo to McNamara, 3.44; on ROLLING THUNDER, 3.333. *See also* Joint Chiefs of Staff; Joint Chiefs of Staff Memoranda; Lemnitzer, Gen. Lyman L.; Taylor, Gen. Maxwell; Wheeler, Gen. Earle G.
Chap Le Army Barracks: 3.298
Chicago Tribune: 4.455
Chicom. *See* People's Republic of China
Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group (CHMAAG): troop commitment and, 2.49. *See also* Military Assistance Advisory Group
Chieu Hoi Program: 2.388, 2.403, 2.491, 2.569, 2.772; improvement of, 2.363; pacification and, 2.572; returnees under, 2.773*n*. *See also* National Reconciliation
China: Communist takeover of, 1.53, 2.828
Chinat. *See* Republic of China
Chinese Nationalists. *See* Republic of China
Chinese People's Republic. *See* People's Republic of China
Chinh-Hunnicutt affair: 2.286, 2.393
CHMAAG: 2.49. *See also* Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group
Christian Science Monitor: 2.560
Chronology: of advisory build-up, 2.415–430; of air war in DRV, 3.275–284, 4.1–17; of Diem overthrow, 2.207–223; of France-Vietnam relations, 1.26–28; of Kennedy commitments, 2.5–17; of military pressures against DRV, 3.117–149; of phased withdrawal, 2.165–173; of ROLLING THUNDER, 3.284–286; of Strategic Hamlet Program, 2.131–132; U.S.-French withdrawal from Vietnam, 1.204–210; U.S. Ground Strategy and Force Deployments, 4.277–290; U.S.-GVN relations, 2.290–303; of U.S. ground troop involvement, 3.398–417; U.S. programs in South Vietnam, 3.6–17
Chuong Thien Province: 3.26
CIA. *See* Central Intelligence Agency, U.S.
CIDG. *See* Civilian Irregular Defense Groups
CINCPAC. *See* Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCPAC 04: 3.517
CINCPAC 03710.2: 3.517
CINCPAC 2504562: 2.238
CINCPACFLT: 3.185
CINCRVNAF: 2.357, 2.360
CINCSTRIKE: 3.451; and troop deployment, 4.542
CIP. *See* Commodity Import Program; Counterinsurgency Plan
Cities, Vietnamese: fighting in, 4.568; security in, 4.557, 4.562–563
Civic Action Ministry: 2.237, 2.675
Civic Action Program: 2.281
Civic Action teams: 1.306–308, 2.702
Civil Administration Corps: 2.195, 2.313, 3.595; increase of, 3.53
Civil Affairs mobile training team: 2.644
Civil aid program: Komer and, 4.391
Civil Air Transport (CAT): 1.576, 2.648–649
Civil Defense Corps: 2.316
Civil disorders: in U.S., 4.541
Civil Guard (CG): 1.256, 2.6, 2.175, 2.434, 2.465, 3.30; casualties of, 2.774–777; and counterinsurgency, 2.651; desertions from, 2.779–780; failure of, 1.314; force levels of, 2.675, 3.63; funds for, 2.136; MAP support for, 2.8, 2.39; missions of, 2.703; regular army and, 2.678; status of, 2.312; training of, 2.451; U.S. support of, 2.8, 2.37, 2.656. *See also* Counterinsurgency
Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG): 2.178, 2.721, 3.47
Civilianization: 4.525, 4.529–530
Civilian Mission: 2.562
Civilians, U.S.: and SVN gov't, 2.398
Civilians, Vietnamese: distrust of gov't, 2.407. *See also* Government of Vietnam
Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS): 2.406–407, 2.413, 2.488; establishment of, 2.487, 2.622–623; organization of, 2.489, 2.491–492; reorganization of, 2.520, 2.619–621. *See also* Revolutionary Development

Civil service: and Diem, 2.707
Civil War: in SVN, 2.820, 4.615
CJCS. *See* Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Clandestine Action Service: 2.653
Clear and hold: concept of, 2.128–129, 2.140, 2.177, 2.186, 2.197, 2,250, 2.723; operations, 2.305, 2.325, 2.722; and pacification, 2.572, 3.54. *See also* Pacification
Clearing: strategy of, 2.495–497
Clifford Working Group: "A to Z" policy review of, 4.238–258; on alternatives in SVN, 4.553; on bombing policy, 2.250–252, 4.253, 4.259; "Clifford Group Review": 4.238–258
Coalition governments: 2.806–807
Coastal plain: 2.91
Coastal waters: 2.90
Cochinchina: 1.16, 1.18, 1.291, 2.694; anti-French attitudes in, 1.292; Declaration of Freedom of, 1.27; nationalist movements in, 1.292; Viet Minh dominated zones of, 1.191. *See also* Cambodia; Indochina; Laos; Vietnam
Cochinchina War. *See* Franco–Viet Minh War
Collective security: 1.613
Collective self-defense: concept of, 4.652
Collins-Ely Agreements: 1.224–225
Collins Mission: 1.223–224. *See also* Collins, Gen. J. Lawton
Colombo Conference: 1.103
Colombo Powers: and Indochina cease-fire, 1.141
Colonialism: French, 1.380; western, 1.601
Combat Development and Test Center: 2.638
Combat force ratio: 4.622
Combat forces, U.S.: 2.474–483; insufficiency of, 4.584; introduction into Vietnam, 2.65–68, 2.75. *See also* Ground forces, U.S.; Troops, U.S.; U.S. forces
Combat Operations: 2.577
Combat Police: 2.762
Combined Action Companies: 2.400
Combined Action Platoon (CAP): 2.413, 2.476
Combined campaign plan, 1967: 2.395, 2.494–498, 4.379–381, 4.386
Combined command. *See* Joint command
Combined MACJ-JGS: 2.477–478
COMIT: 2.642
Command: chain of, 2.437, 2.492, 2.541, 2.574; civilian lines of, 2.593–594, 2.601
Command and General Staff College: 2.510
Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC): 2.162–163, 2.176–177, 2.181–182, 3.203, 3.252, 3.300, 4.230; and advisory effort, 2.465–466; alert of, 2.41; barrier project and, 4.123, 4.336; bombing policies of, 3.262, 3.271, 3.298, 4.109, 4.124, 4.139, 4.192–193, 4.195–196, 4.207, 4.410–411; and enclave strategy, 3.468; on escalation, 4.196; Headquarters, 3.23; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; on infiltration, 4.417; joint command and, 2.477; logistic support by, 1.512–513; MAAG and, 2.19; military objectives of, 4.124, 4.395–396; on mining NVN ports, 4.415; OPLAN 32-64, 3.427; OPLAN 37-64, 3.287; OPLAN 39-65, 3.427; Plan 32/59 PHASE IV, 2.112; Planning Conferences of, 4.315–318, 4.358–361; on POL, 4.101, 4.105; Program 4 and, 4.432; troop commitment and, 2.13, 2.49, 2.83–84; on troop deployments, 3.419–420, 3.422, 3.429, 4.309–310; on troop levels, 2.112, 4.319, 4.324. *See also* Felt, Adm. Harry; Radford, Adm. Arthur W.
Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet: 3.185
Commander in Chief, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (CINCRVNAF): 2.357, 2.360
"Commander's Estimate of the Situation": 2.357, 3.450
"Commander's Personal Military Assessment of the Fourth Quarter, CY 63": 3.39–40. *See also* COMUSMACV; MACV
Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV): 2.164–165, 2.177, 2.181, 2.192, 2.194, 2.355–357, 2.359, 2.362, 2.393–394, 3.27, 3.30, 3.252; and advisory effort, 2.198, 2.326, 2.463, 2.465–466; on American takeover, 2.380; on anti-infiltration barrier, 4.416; and CPSVN, 2.162; Deputy, 2.585, 2.591, 2.617, 2.619; and encadrement, 2.476; force requirements of, 2.468, 3.417, 4.431–435, 4.466–467; at Honolulu Conference, 3.358; independence of, 2.281; JCS and, 4.571; on military situation,

4.517–518, 4.538; "Monthly Evaluations for March and April 1965," 3.436; on NVA/VC capabilities, 4.403–406; pacification and, 2.351, 2.574, 2.589; and PROVN, 2.380; and RD, 2.602; on RVNAF effectiveness, 4.425; on US-ARVN cooperation, 2.288, 2.360. *See also* Harkins, Gen. Paul D.; Westmoreland, Gen. Wm. C.
Commando-type raids: 2.646
Commercial Import Program. *See* Commodity Import Program
Committee of National Salvation: 2.347
Committee on Province Rehabilitation (COPROR): 2.787
Committee of the South: 1.45
Commodities: as leverage, 2.374, 2.379, 2.383. *See also* Leverage
Commodity Import Program (CIP): 2.316, 2.318, 2.761; resumption of, 2.255, 2.383; suspension of, 2.253, 2.763
Commune system: 2.625
Communications Intelligence: 2.641
Communism: Asian, 4.647–648, 4.682; "battle against," 2.10; escalation of, 2.112; ideology of, 2.821; international, 1.615, 1.616, 1.622; JFK on, 2.809, 2.829, 2.831; in SE Asia, 1.377, 1.385, 2.108, 2.111, 2.459, 2.654, 2.817; in SVN, 2.692–699; targets for, 1.489; threat of, 1.361, 1.590, 1.628, 2.33; and world revolution, 4.634, 4.641
Communist China. *See* People's Republic of China
Communist Denunciation Campaigns: 1.311, 1.324–325. *See also* Diem gov't, anti-communist laws under
Communist Party: French, 1.22, 4.163; North Vietnamese, 2.35, 2.692, 2.693. *See also* Lao Dong Party
Communists: 4.484–486; aggression of, 4.660; on air attacks, 4.172; and Buddhists, 2.731; expansion of, 4.646, 4.678; policy of, 4.623; possible retaliation of, 3.665; strategy of, 3.737; in SVN, 3.658, 4.358–359; war policy of, 4.50; weapons of, 3.716; worldwide offensive of, 2.797. *See also* DRV; Viet Nam Cong-San (VC)
Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam (CPSVN): 2.162–164, 2.197; cost comparison of, 2.178; force level of, 2.180; Model M Plan of, 2.163, 2.182, 2.185, 2.188, 2.190–191, 2.198, 2.316; objectives of, 2.176; review of, 2.179; revision of, 2.177, 2.181
Compromise solution: 4.615–619, 4.622; Sec. Ball on, 3.472–473, 4.49; military program, 4.616; political program, 4.616–617. *See also* Negotiations
"Compromise Solution for South Vietnam": 3.472–473, 4.49
COMUSMACV. *See* Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONARC: 4.542
"Concept of Intervention in Vietnam": 2.74, 2.80, 2.98
Confederation of Vietnamese Labor: 1.310
"Confidence factor": 4.669
Congress, U.S.: bombing criticism of, 4.217; briefing by Dulles, 1.500–501; China Aid Program, 1.36; Economic Cooperation Act, 1.36; MDAP of, 1.36; and troop deployment, 4.588. *See also* Senate, U.S.
Congressional resolution: on bombing NVN, 3.77, 3.174, 3.180, 3.187–188, 3.520. *See also* Tonkin Gulf Resolution
Constitutional Assembly: 2.377, 2.384, 2.395; election of, 2.318
Constitutional Convention: 2.371
Constitutional Preparatory Commission: 2.372
Constitution, SVN: draft, 4.150; writing of, 2.370, 2.395, 2.400
Constitution, U.S.: 2.824
Construction: 2.658; highway and bridge, 2.676; hit-and-miss, 2.686
"Containment of the Sanctuaries": 4.341
Containment policy: 1.449
Contingency planning: 2.75, 2.654, 3.420–421, 3.422
Coolidge Commission: 2.21
COPROR: 2.787
Coral Sea: 3.302
CORDS. *See* Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
Corps I: 2.61, 2.186–187, 2.363, 3.20, 4.584; force requirements, 4.428–429; force strengths in, 4.433; MACV operations in, 4.447–453; tactical situation in, 4.607–609; VC/NVA in, 4.433
Corps II: 2.186, 2.187, 2.363, 3.20; force requirements, 2.61, 4.429; MACV operations in, 4.447–453; tactical situation in, 4.607–609; VC/NVZ in, 4.434
Corps III: 2.187, 2.265, 3.31; areas, 2.186, 3.20; force requirements, 4.429;

Corps III: (*cont'd*)
tactical situation in, 4.609; tactical zone of, 2.526; VC infrastructure in, 4.434–435
Corps IV: 2.187, 2.264; force requirements, 4.430; as GVN responsibility, 4.444; 9th Division in, 4.430; tactical situation in, 4.609. *See also* Mekong Delta
Corps Monthly Operational Maps: 4.451–454
Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ): 2.177, 2.487
Corruption: in SVN, 2.366, 2.384, 2.391, 2.502–503, 2.596, 2.705
COSVN: 3.383
Council of Notables: abolishment of, 2.316; advisory role of, 2.309; Pseudo Parliament, 2.303
Counter-escalation: 4.164
Counterguerrilla warfare: 2.703
Counter-infiltration operations: 3.341
Counterinsurgency: 3.235; and Buddhist crisis, 2.731; course in, 2.728; deterioration of, 2.458; doctrine of, 2.148, 2.689; funding for, 2.640; GVN effort in, 2.699–704, 2.713–714; and GVN stability, 3.2, 3.41; instruction in, 2.669; Kennedy administration and, 2.32, 2.667; Gen. Lemnitzer on, 2.650–651; McGarr's emphasis on, 2.435; personnel for, 2.682–683; research and development for, 2.684; schools for, 2.668–669; SNIE on, 2.729; standards for success, 2.754; State's assessment of, 2.673–681; theory of, 2.454; training objectives for, 2.667; Vietnamese politics and, 3.22
Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP): 2.1, 2.2, 2.23–27, 2.137–138, 2.141, 2.382, 2.436–437, 2.669; disagreement about, 1.269; establishment of, 2.660; Kennedy approval of, 2.6; of MAAG, 2.138, 2.141; negotiating of, 2.27–29; U.S. support and, 2.39
Counter-subversion: CIA support of, 2.648
Country Internal Defense Plans: 2.682
Countryside, Vietnamese: Communist position in, 2.697–699; control of, 2.507, 2.571, 2.582, 2.690, 2.787, 4.548, 4.556, 4.558, 4.561–563, 4.566, 4.577–578; Diem's position in, 2.708–709. *See also* Pacification; Rural Development
Country Team: 2.192, 2.443, 2:537, 2.648, 2.682, 3.31; weakness of, 3.494
Coup, Diem. *See* Diem coup
Course of Action in Southeast Asia: documents on, 3.621, 3.630–632, 3.639–640, 3.642–644, 3.648–650
Covert Action Branch. *See* CAS
Covert Action Program: 3.149–152
Covert activities: 1.387, 1.389, 1.438, 2.653, 3.571–575
CPR. *See* People's Republic of China
CPSVN. *See* Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam
CRCC: 2.365
Credibility gap: 2.163, 2.610, 4.388, 4.455
Crop destruction: 3.45
Cross-border operations: 2.459, 3.191. *See also* Border control actions
Cross-over point: Bundy and, 4.503, J2 and, 4.518; Gen. Westmoreland and, 4.479
Crypto RATT: 3.299
CTZ: 2.177, 2.487
Cuba: 3.201; Vietnam policy and, 2.161, 2.174
Cuban missile crisis: 2.11, 2.174, 2.823
CVA air wing: 3.298

Dai Viet Qhoc Dan Dong (the Dai Viet): 1.44, 1.314–315, 2.709; coup attempt by, 2.335
Dak To: 4.567
Dakto-Ban Net-Attapeu Road: 2.83
Dalat Conference: 1.26
Da Nang: media commentary on, 3.426; site of Marine landing, 2.354, 2.356, 2.372–373, 2.477, 2.533, 2.559, 2.657, 3.389, 3.545, 3.547. *See also* Marine Corps, U.S.
Darlac Province: Montagnards in, 2.687. *See also* Montagnards
DASD: 2.383, 2.396
Decentralization: authority of, 2.501
Decentralization of Action: 2.305
Decisionmaking: process of, 2.451, 2.539, 2.664
Declaration of the November 1960 Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist Countries: 1.265
Decree Law 10: 2.240
De-escalation: 4.597; and bombing effectiveness, 4.162; problems of, 4.176–177. *See also* Escalation
Defeat: implications of, 4.612
Defections. *See* Desertions
Defended hamlet: 2.140
Defended village: 2.142

Defense Department. *See* Department of Defense, U.S.

Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA): 2.77, 2.164, 2.183, 2.192, 3.333, 4.291; on failure of POL strikes, 4.111; Intelligence Bulletin, 2.183–184; on POL system, 4.68; on Tonkin reprisals, 3.192

Defoliation: 2.671, 4.335

Delta. *See* Mekong Delta

Delta Pacification Plan. *See* Mekong Delta

Demarcation line. See Vietnam: demarcation line proposals for

Demilitarized Zone (DMZ): 3.635; defoliation of, 4.335; infiltration through, 4.335; operations in, 2.364; U.S. Marines in, 4.453

Democracy Building Council: 2.368

Democratic Bloc: 1.315

Democratic People's Republic of (North) Vietnam (DRV): 1.6, 2.9, 3.65–66; as aggressor, 3.714; agrarian economy of, 4.232; all-out bombing of, 4.244–245; and all-Vietnam elections, 1.247; arms levels, 1.249; army of, *see* North Vietnamese Army (NVA); bombing of, 2.325, 2.344, 3.1, 4.18 (*see also* Bombing: of NVN); and bombing halt, 4.218–219; and bombing pause, 3.379, 4.33, 4.36; British backing of, 4.611; and China, 4.58, 4.64; covert action in, 3.500, 3.502, 3.508; covert actions of, 3.498; destruction of vital resources in, 4.230; economy of, 1.264, 2.820, 3.215, 4.136, 4.225; effect of bombing on, 3.215; establishment of, 1.16; food supplies of, 1.264; foreign aid to, 4.225–227; and France, 1.3, 1.182; Franco-American differences on, 1.285–286; GNP of, 1.264, 4.225; government of, 1.46–47; infiltration into SVN, 1.264, 2.696, 3.252, 3.681; internal crises in, 1.246, 1.262; and "I shall not seek" speech, 4.275; JFK on, 2.806; and LBJ, 4.205; military pressure on, 3.65, 3.252; morale of, 3.214, 3.654, 4.192, 4.261, 4.389; nationalism of, 1.262, 4.457, 4.463; on negotiations, 4.155, 4.240–241, 4.480, 4.602; and peace initiatives, 3.356, 4.352; policy of, 3.653–654; possible invasion of, 2.462, 4.244–245; power plants of, 4.201; reactions to air strikes, 3.167, 3.169, 3.174–175, 3.193, 3.308, 4.58; refugees in, 1.248; relations with Soviet Union, 1.261, 1.262–263, 4.58, 4.78; and Rusk, 3.725; and San Antonio formula, 4.206, 4.237, 4.253; secret contacts with U.S., 4.150, 4.237; Sino-Soviet aid to, 2.60, 4.242, 4.321; strategy of, 4.304, 4.576; strength in SVN, 4.622; supplies to south of, 4.57; support of insurgency in SVN, 1.263, 1.265; targets in, 3.298, 3.299–300, 3.305, 3.678, 4.56 (*see also* Bombing program; Target system); and Tet offensive, 4.228; and U.S. elections, 4.477–478; U.S. estimates of, 3.99, 3.153, 3.212, 3.213, 3.635, 4.110, 4.604; U.S. military operations in, 2.315, 2.319, 2.321, 2.323, 2.327, 2.329–331, 3.513 (*see also* Air strikes; Air war; Bombing); U.S. military pressure on, 2.459, 3.89–90, 3.106–117, 3.182, 3.194, 3.221, 3.240, 3.245, 4.533–536, 4.611; U.S. overflights of, 2.641; and U.S. policy, 3.330; and VC, 2.693, 3.652–653, 3.656, 3.668, 3.670; and war of attrition, 4.509; war policy of, 4.63

Demographic frontier: 4.565, 4.583

Denmark: 3.257

Den Muang Airfield: 2.657

Department of Defense, U.S. (DOD): cost of force increases and, 4.510; Diem reforms and, 2.21; DOD 152339Z, 3.436; dollar guidelines of, 2.177–179; on expansion of U.S. combat role, 3.455–456; Geneva Conf. and, 1.448–451; on ground forces in Indochina, 1.93; and SVN mobilization, 3.59; systems analysis of, 4.556; on troop deployments, 4.323; on Vietnam partition, 1.142–143

Department of State, U.S.: on aid to Indochina, 1.7, 1.405–410; on all-Vietnam elections, 1.287; on Bao Dai, 1.70–71; on bombing pause, 4.33–34; cables to Lodge, 2.734–735, 2.737–738; Clifford Group papers of, 4.553 (*see also* Clifford Group); on commitment to Indochina, 1.363; on communism in SE Asia, 1.5; Country Internal Defense Plans of, 2.682; on expansion of U.S. combat role, 3.455–456; on Franco-Viet Minh negotiations, 1.20–21; on Franco-Viet Minh War, 1.31–32, 1.184; on ground force deployment, 3.420; on Ho Chi Minh, 1.20–21; on Ho Chi Minh Trail, 1.33–34; on inflation in SVN, 4.339; on intervention in Indochina, 1.94; and ISA on military situation, 3.157–159;

Department of State, U.S.: (*cont'd*) justification of war, 3.729; meeting of (Aug. 1963), 2.741–743; memo of conversation with president, 2.728–729; Policy Planning Council of, 3.200; policy recommendations of, 3.265–266; post-Tonkin views of, 3.205; progress report from, 2.673; recognizes Associated States, 1.64–65; support of "carrot and stick," 3.115; on Trinh statement, 4.233; on Vietnamese Communists, 1.34
Dependents, U.S.: withdrawal of, 3.244, 3.266, 3.297, 3.315, 3.630, 3.686
Deployment: inflation and, 4.369; JCS opposition to, 4.542; public reaction to, 4.559; strategy of, 4.421–423; summary for 1967–68, 4.460. *See also* Troop deployment
DEPTEL: 534, 2.253; 576, 2.786; 619, 2.16; 727, 3.576; 763, 3.578–579; 4853, 1.547
Desertions: ARVN, 2.473, 2.508, 2.703–704; CG, 2.779–780; RVNAF, 2.508, 2.779–780; SDC, 2.779–780; SVN military, 2.703–704, 2.772–780; VC, 2.772–780
DeSoto patrols: 2.329, 2.331, 2.333, 3.182, 3.195, 3.203, 3.209, 3.244, 3.291, 3.298, 3.300, 3.302, 3.641; restrictions of, 3.525–527, 3.534, 3.536; resumption of, 3.194, 3.299, 3.319, 3.543–544, 3.547–548, 3.551–552, 3.558, 3.561–563, 3.568–569, 3.609. *See also* Operation DESOTO
De-Stalinization: 1.261
Developing countries: 2.685, 2.804, 2.815; counterinsurgency problems in, 2.668–669; U.S. and, 2.58
Development Fund: GVN, 2.397
DIA. *See* Defense Intelligence Agency
Diem coup: 2.94, 2.158, 2.189–190, 3.2; abortive attempts at, 1.322–324, 2.236–240, 2.704, 2.792; aftermath of, 2.160–161, 2.163, 2.165, 2.190, 2.192, 2.200, 2.272–273, 2.303, 3.22; chronology of, 2.207–223; contingencies of, 2.783, 2.789; execution of, 2.267–269; factions in, 2.262; foreshadowings of, 2.183–184; Amb. Lodge and, 2.782; situation leading to, 2.691, 2.741–743, 2.763–764; U.S. discouragement of, 2.766, 2.792; U.S. expectations of, 2.457; U.S. involvement in, 2.203–204, 2.206–207, 2.231, 2.233–238, 2.246–247, 2.250, 2.256–262, 2.716, 2.735–739, 2.765, 2.781–789, 2.791
Diem family: 2.706–707; Buddhist crisis and, 2.731; Catholicism of, 1.321–322; political power of, 1.299; and U.S. government, 2.732; whispering campaign against, 1.200. *See also* Diem, Ngo Dinh; Ngo family; Nhu family; Nhu, Madame; Nhu, Ngo Dinh
Diem government: 1.253, 2.18; agroville program under, 1.256; alienation of peasants, 1.252, 1.329, 1.338–339; alternatives to, 2.733, 2.764–766; anticolonialist feelings toward, 1.295–296; anti-Communist campaign of, 1.257–258, 1.311, 1.324–325; anti-French position of, 1.210–211; and Buddhist crisis, 2.183 (*see also* Buddhist crisis); bureaucratic overcentralization of, 1.300, 2.136; cabinet reorganization of, 2.29; Caravelle Manifesto against, 1.316–321; CJCS criticisms of, 3.20; Gen. Collins' objections to, 1.226; conflict with armed sects, 1.303–305; counterinsurgency of, 1.325 (*see also* Counterinsurgency); coup attempts against, 1.257, 1.322–324, 2.236–240 (*see also* Diem coup); credibility of, 2.160; dissatisfaction with, 2.5, 2.733, 2.758; domestic problems of, 1.298–299; economic costs of, 2.62–63; elite discontent and, 2.759; Farmers' Associations and, 1.310; and France, 1.225, 1.231–232, 1.240; Franco-American reactions to, 1.223, 1.238, 1.303–304; key persons in, 1.210; labor position on, 2.759; land reform under, 1.254, 1.309–310; martial law under, 2.734; methods of control of, 2.789–790; militarization of, 1.323; military opposition to, 1.322–324; military reforms of, 2.24; Montagnard discontent under, 1.255; nationalist opposition to, 1.314–322; nepotism in, 1.299 (*see also* Diem family; Nhu family); as oligarchy, 1.253; overthrow of, 2.20, 2.118, 2.189, 3.1 (*see also* Diem coup); pacification program of, 1.254, 1.305–314; political opposition in, 1.256; political parties under, 1.302; political reeducation centers under, 1.255; population relocation under, 1.255, 1.312–313; repressions of, 2.201, 2.705, 2.760; rural security under, 1.254–256, 1.314; threats to, 2.633–635; Tonkinese refugees and, 1.248; United Front demands on, 1.229–230; unpopularity of, 1.251, 2.185, 2.187;

U.S. advisors and, 2.450–452 (*see also* Advisory effort); U.S. aid and, 2.1, 2.36, 2.59, 2.90; U.S. commitments to, 2.96; U.S. confidence in, 2.69, 2.189, 2.202; U.S. estimates of, 1.260; and U.S. government, 1.268, 2.732, 2.765–766, 3.23; U.S. leverage and, 2.498, 2.761–763; U.S. pressures on, 2.765–766; U.S. support of, 1.226–227, 2.29, 2.64, 2.665; and Viet Cong, 2.25, 3.729; and village traditions, 1.310; weakness of, 2.224

Dien Bien Phu: 1.97, 1.444, 1.461, 1.476; chance of success at, 1.456–457; ethnic composition of garrison, 1.68; fall of, 1.56, 1.106, 1.482–487, 1.542, 1.575, 1.603; French political situation and, 1.480–481; Operation Vulture (Vautour), 1.97; U.S. assistance to, 1.455; U.S. intervention and, 1.100–101, 1.104, 1.461

District advisors: 2.472, 2.479. *See also* Advisors, U.S.

Division: 1st U.S., 2.381

Division: 2nd Air, 2.178–179; 25th, 2.381

Divisional Tactical Area (DTA): 2.487

Division commanders: Diem's reliance on, 2.703

DMZ. *See* Demilitarized Zone

Doan Ket. *See* National Reconciliation

Documents, captured: 4.387, 4.418–420

Documents, list of: Nos. 1–95, 1.347–360; Nos. 96–155, 2.624–632; Nos. 156–256, 3.486–493; Nos. 257–265, 4.605

DOD. *See* Department of Defense, U.S.

DOD 152339Z: 3.436

Domino theory (or principle): 1.82–83, 1.598, 1.602–603, 2.162, 2.412, 2.664, 2.798, 3.3, 3.153, 3.178, 3.194, 3.265, 3.710, 3.712, 4.89, 4.389, 4.454; Britain and, 1.56; Burma and, 1.361, 1.373; and containment of China, 4.650; criticism of, 3.220; dismissal of, 3.724; Eisenhower on, 1.597; JCS on, 2.663; Kennedy on, 2.817–818, 2.828; McNaughton on, 4.90–91; and NSAM-288, 3.51; Rusk on, 4.681; and U Thant, 4.662

Dong Hoi: 3.286, 3.298

Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnam Revolutionary League): 1.44

Dong Zoai, battle of: 2.361, 2.473, 3.440

Don Muang Airfield. *See* Den Muang Airfield

Doves: 4.559–560. *See also* War effort: domestic criticism of

DPM. *See* Draft Presidential Memo

Draft: Vietnamese, 2.460; U.S., 1.422

"Draft Position Paper on Southeast Asia": 3.249

Draft Presidential Memo (DPM): "Alternative Military Actions Against North Vietnam," 4.509; of McG. Bundy, 2.319–320; of C. Clifford, 4.252–258; "Future Actions in Vietnam," 4.168–177, 4.501–511; of R. S. McNamara, 4.168–177, 4.296, 4.309, 4.365–378; of J. T. McNaughton, 4.162, 4.474–489, 4.509

Draper Committee: 2.435

DTZ: RVNAF in, 4.578

Dumbarton Oaks Conference: 1.2, 1.14

Eastern Construction Company: 2.647. *See also* Freedom Company

Eastern Europe: aid to NVN, 4.137

Economic policy of GVN: 2.389–391. *See also* Government of Vietnam

Economist: 3.307

EDC. *See* European Defense Community

USS *Edwards:* 3.194

18th Fixed Wing Aircraft Company: 2.657

Eight-week Program: description of, 3.319; estimated effects of, 3.320; JCS support of, 3.318; risks of escalation, 3.319

82nd Airborne Division: 4.540, 4.584; deployment of, 4.541, 4.542, 4.544

Eisenhower administration: 2.19; Indochina policy of, 2.562; justification of the war, 1.585–587, 1.591–629; key persons in, 1.209; Laos and, 2.22; national security structure of, 2.32; SE Asia policy of, 1.54; Vietnam commitment of, 2.20

Elections, all-Vietnam: Diem opposition to, 1.239, 1.245–246; DRV-GVN negotiations on, 1.247, 1.288; feasibility of, 1.453; flaws in provisions for, 1.244–245; Geneva Accords on, 1.284, 1.559–560; NVN expectations of, 1.284; SVN expectations of, 1.284–285; UN supervision of, 1.569; U.S. on, 1.239, 1.287, 1.288–289, 1.546–547. *See also* Unification

Elections, South Vietnamese: 2.370–372, 2.374, 2.781, 2.821; Sept. 1963, 2.750; Sept. 1966, 2.377, 2.555; and U.S. policy, 2.376–378, 2.744

Elections, U.S.: 2.402; effect on Vietnam policy, 3.1, 3.77, 3.113, 3.212–213, 3.288, 3.594; war issue and, 4.363
Electoral Law Commission: 2.378
"Elements of a Policy That Does Not Include a Congressional Resolution": 3.77
11th Light Infantry Brigade: 4.528
Elysee Agreement: 1.27, 1.58
Embassy, U.S. *See* Saigon Embassy
EMBTEL 201: 3.512; 465, 2.336–337; 870, 3.576; 1046, 3.583; 1068, 3.579–580; 1438, 3.628; 3003, 3.445–447; 3384, 3.437
Encadrement: 2.351–359, 2.413, 2.475, 3.457. *See also* Joint command
Enclave strategy: 3.394, 3.448, 3.452; development of, 3.453–458, 3.461; expectations of, 3.479; implications of, 3.395
Enemy engagements: types of, 4.462. *See also* Military operations
Enemy forces: attrition of, 4.370. *See also* War of attrition
Enemy sanctuaries: 4.337. *See also* Cambodia
"The Equipment Recovery Mission": 2.408, 2.433–435
Equivalent punishment: concept of, 3.305
Erskine Mission: 1.197
Erskine Report: 1.90–91, 1.496
ERP (European Recovery Program): 1.35, 1.184
Escalation: 2.199, 2.336–337, 3.48, 3.84–85, 3.200, 3.710; bombing pause and, 4.59; Chinese intervention and, 4.63; control of, 3.698; controlled, 3.672–673; de-escalation, 4.597; evaluation of, 4.592; initiation of, 2.306, 3.5; and JFK, 2.811; and McNamara, 4.107; military Presidential advisors and, 4.160; and provocation by U.S., 3.110; risks of, 3.319, 4.63
European Defense Community (EDC): effect on Geneva Conference, 1.168; and Franco-American relations, 1.79–80; French attitude toward, 1.558
European Recovery Program (ERP): 1.35, 1.184
EXDIS: from Sec. Ball, 3.586–587; from Amb. Lodge, 3.61; from Amb. Taylor, 3.590–591, 3.704
Executive Committee of the Fatherland Front (Mat tren To Quoc): 1.339
Executive Committee of the Military Revolutionary Council: 2.272. *See also* Military Revolutionary Council
Expatriates: Vietnamese, 2.704, 2.709
Expressen: 1.95

FAGOT/FRESCO: 3.636
FAIRFAX: 2.483, 2.516, 4.409, 4.447
Fallback position: 3.112
Far East: U.S. policy toward, 1.5–6, 1.420; U.S. security and, 1.436. *See also* Southeast Asia
Farmgate: 2.178, 2.179, 2.349, 3.162, 3.195, 3.199, 3.208, 3.503; concept of, 3.70; cross-border operations of, 3.540. *See also* Air strikes
Fast/full squeeze: 3.223
Faure government: 1.209
Federal Republic of Germany: 3.257
Fertilizer: stockpiling of, 2.676; U.S. supply of, 3.64
Fertilizer Program: 2.195, 3.3, 3.509
Feudalists: 1.314–315
FFORCEV: 2.473
Field advisors: 2.454, 2.499. *See also* Advisors
Fighter-bomber squadron: 2.13. *See also* Air strikes; Air war
First Indochina War. *See* Franco–Viet Minh War
First Logistical Command: Program 4 and, 4.471
First Observation Battalion: 2.641
First Observation Group: 2.643–644
Five-Power Staff Agency: 1.502
Five-Year Plans: of GVN, 2.710
FLAMING DART: 3.286, 3.300, 3.305; I, 3.271; II, 3.271, 3.306; issuance of, 3.270; raids, 2.279, 3.5, 3.92. *See also* Reprisal actions; Sustained reprisals
FLASH message: to Taylor, 3.336
Flash points: 3.697
Flood relief: economic aid for, 2.114; U.S. military presence and, 2.14, 2.85–87, 2.89–91, 2.103, 2.107–108, 2.110, 2.118, 2.448; task force on, 2.88, 2.91, 2.101, 2.105, 2.106, 2.121
Food rations: 2.358
Food surplus: in Southeast Asia, 2.654
FOOTBOY: 4.214
Force: controlled use of, 3.112–113. *See also* Ground forces; Military operations
Force deployments: projected, 4.366–368. *See also* Troop deployment
Force increases: cost of, 4.510. *See also* War effort, financing of
Force levels: McNaughton on, 4.488–489; under Program 5, 4.526
Force Populaire program: 2.686, 2.721

Force ratio: ARVN to VC, 4.399; concept of, 3.440, 3.465

Force requirements: 4.486–487; and COMUSMACV, 4.385; FY 1968, 4.427–431, 4.437; MACV and, 4.473. *See also* Ground forces: Troop deployment

Forces, U.S. *See* U.S. forces

Foreign Affairs: 1.325

Foreign exchange negotiations: 2.396–397

Foreign Operations Intelligence: 2.644

Foreign Service Institute: 2.669

Formosa: strategic importance of, 1.418; U.S. support of, 1.590. *See also* Republic of China

Fort McKinley: STC and, 2.648

Fortress America: concept of, 2.58

44 battalion force: 2.474, 3.396, 3.462, 3.467, 3.470, 3.471. *See also* Phase I

Forty-one-point program: 3.98–100, 3.702

"Forward defense" nations: 3.717

Four points: of Pham Van Dong, 3.274

14-Nation conference: 3.188, 3.684. *See also* Geneva Accords, 1962; Geneva Conference, 1962

14-Nation formula: 3.188

France: air and armor superiority of, 1.518; on all-Vietnam elections, 1.540; colonialism of, 1.497; conscripts, 1.554; and Diem, 1.285–286; and DRV, 1.285–286; assessment of Indochinese position, 1.396–397; at Geneva Conf., 1.550, 1.532–533; and Ho Chi Minh, 1.361; in Indochina, 2.46; military situation in Indochina, 1.523, 1.536; opposes "united action," 1.103; outdated military techniques of, 1.490; post-Geneva role in Vietnam, 1.210; U.S. aid to, 1.405–410, 1.437, 1.452; U.S. cooperation with, 1.388; U.S. pressure on, 1.474; U.S. support of, 1.387; Viet Minh and, 2.820 (see also Franco–Viet Minh War); Vietnam policy of, 1.54, 1.551; at Washington Conference, 1.220–221; withdrawal from Indochina, 1.452; withdrawal from NATO, 4.94

Franco–Viet Minh armistice: provisions of, 1.249

France–Viet Minh War: 1.3, 1.45; after Dien Bien Phu, 1.122, 1.146; beginning of, 1.22; channel of command, 1.489; and Chinese Communist victory, 1.185–187; and Chinese intervention threat, 1.170, 1.187; combatant forces, 1.123; conditions for U.S. involvement in, 1.124–125; critique of U.S. policy toward, 1.202–204; and domino theory, 1.498; Eisenhower Administration on, 1.86; Franco-American cooperation in, 1.201; France-American military requirements, 1.467–468, 1.471; and French antiwar sentiment, 1.95–96; Korean war and, 1.517; military conduct of, 1.495–497; Navarre Plan, 1.77; negotiations, 1.539; paradoxes of, 1.487; political aspects of, 1.497; psychological aspects of, 1.497–499; U.S. aid to, 1.179, 1.200, 1.498; U.S. intervention in, 1.4, 1.55, 1.122–132; U.S. neutrality in, 1.4, 1.184; U.S. plans for involvement in, 1.126–127; U.S. policy toward, 1.29; and U.S. on negotiations, 1.96, 1.115

Franco-Vietnamese High Military Council: 1.396

Free Cambodian Forces: 1.111

Free Democratic Party: 1.315

Freedom Company: 1.580, 2.647

Free Khmer: Geneva Accord on, 1.160

"Free Laos": 1.398

Free Laotian Forces. *See* Pathet Lao

Free World: security of, 2.800

Free World battalions: PAVN increase and, 4.308

Free World Forces: 2.491; and 4:1 advantage, 4.295

Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF): 2.547, 3.481; funding of, 2.386; and RD, 2.584

French Air Force. *See* Air Force, French

French Communist Party: 4.163

French Expeditionary Corps (FEP): 1.184, 1.541, 1.549, 1.608; cost of, 1.408; strength of, 1.400; withdrawal of, 1.612. *See also* French forces; French naval forces; French Union forces

French forces: 1.362; in Indochina, 1.369; logistics of, 1.493; static defense of, 1.394. *See also* French Expeditionary Corps; French naval forces; French Union forces

French Foreign Legion: 1.445

French Indochina: *See* Indochina; Southeast Asia

French-Indochina War. *See* Franco–Viet Minh War

French naval forces: in Indochina, 1.404; organization of, 1.493. *See also* French Expeditionary Corps; French forces

French Socialist Party: 1.22
French Union: Associated States as members of, 1.555; collapse of, 1.483; definition of, 1.368; Dien Bien Phu casualties, 1.484; military plans of, 1.396; NATO support of, 1.591; objectives in Vietnam, 1.492; popular support of, 1.392, 1.398; U.S. military aid to, 1.394; U.S. support of, 1.592–593; Vietnam within, 1.367. *See also* Associated States
French Union forces: ground, 1.492; inadequate staff of, 1.496–497; tactics of, 1.496; in Tonkin Delta, 1.393; total, 1.123; U.S. aid to, 1.439. *See also* Air Force, French; French Expeditionary Corps; French forces; French naval forces
Frontier ranger force: 2.86
Frustration: of U.S., 2.458–459. *See also* Optimism, Pessimism
Fulbright Committee hearings: and Gavin thesis, 4.314. *See also* Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Funnel. *See* Bombing: alternative strategies
FWMAF. *See* Free World Military Assistance Forces

Gallop Poll: on U.S. support of war, 4.99–100. *See also* Public opinion
Gamble: U.S. in Vietnam, 2.408–409, 2.431–435. *See also* U.S. Vietnam commitment; U.S. Vietnam policy
Gavin thesis: 4.314. *See also* Gavin, Gen. James
Generals, Council of: 2.60–61; and Diem coup, 2.790; pay-offs and, 2.787; Saigon, 2.735
Geneva Accords, 1954: 2.68, 2.808, 3.723, 3.732, 4.600; advisory limits of, 2.431; on all-Vietnam elections, 1.159; on arms control, 1.249; as basis for negotiations, 4.273; on Cambodia, 1.160–161, 1.270–282; compared to Seven Points, 1.176–177; Diem rejection of, 1.245, 1.285; failure of, 1.250; and ICC role, 1.159; inadequacy of, 1.243–244, 1.250, 1.283, 2.45; on Laos, 1.160–161, 1.270–282; on partition of Vietnam, 1.158; provisions of, 1.176–177; on regroupment, 1.289; SV opposition to, 1.163–164; U.S. declaration on, 1.162, 1.568–569, 1.570–571; U.S. dissatisfaction with, 1.283; U.S. evaluation of, 1.177; U.S. overriding of, 2.39, 2.40, 2.76, 2.119, 2.650, 2.670, 4.649–650, 4.652; U.S. refusal to sign, 1.161; on Vietnam, 1.270–282
Geneva Accords, 1962: 4.517
Geneva Accords, 1954–1962: 3.614, 3.646
Geneva Accords, violations of: DRV, 2.80, 2.116, 2.670–672, 2.806, 4.645; NVN, 3.720; SVN, 2.815; U.S., 2.39, 2.76, 2.119
Geneva Agreements. *See* Geneva Accords, 1954; Geneva Accords, 1962
Geneva Conference, 1954: 1.80, 1.543, 2.2, 2.111; "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam," 1.284; armistice agreements, 1.559; British position at, 1.142, 1.174–175; cease-fire proposals, 1.139–141, 1.147; on Cambodia, 1.136–139, 1.154–157; Chinese attack U.S. at, 1.155–156; Chinese on Cambodia at, 1.154; Chinese diplomacy at, 1.148–149; Chinese on Laos at, 1.154; Chinese objectives at, 1.169–172; Communist proposals at, 1.140, 1.506; Communist unity at, 1.114; CPR at, 1.170; deadlock at, 1.520; and Defense Department, 1.454; Dulles on, 1.460, 1.600–601; Final Declaration of, 1.177, 1.284, 1.571–573, 1.606–608; First Plenary Session, 1.504–506; Franco-American disagreement at, 1.149–151, 1.153; French at, 1.117, 1.504–505; French objectives at, 1.175; and French political situation, 1.533; instructions to U.S. delegation, 1.507, 1.152–153; on Laos, 1.135, 1.136–139, 1.154–157; military vs. political settlement at, 1.133; negotiators at, 1.10, 1.111; on partition of Vietnam, 1.134, 1.142, 1.146; political arrangements of, 1.559; private negotiations at, 1.564; Seven Points, 1.144–145; and Sino-Soviet relations, 1.168–169; Soviet objectives at, 1.166–169; Soviet position at, 1.506; U.S. commitment and, 1.499; U.S. declaration at, 1.568–569, 1.570–571; U.S. objectives at, 1.175–178; U.S. participation in, 1.544, 1.551, 1.558, 1.605; U.S. position at, 1.113, 1.114, 1.120–122, 1.451–454, 1.536, 1.563; U.S. proposals at, 1.142, 1.505, 1.550, 1.552; Viet Minh objectives at, 1.172–174; Viet Minh proposals at, 1.119, 1.145, 1.505; Vietnamese delegation to, 1.569–570; Western dissension at, 1.114; Western proposals at,

1.140–141. *See also* Geneva Accords, 1954

Geneva Conference, 1962: on Laos, 2.174, 2.175, 3.188, 3.197

Geneva Conference on Vietnam: proposed reconvening of, 3.188, 3.197, 3.248

Geneva Settlement. *See* Geneva Accords, 1954

"Geographically Phased National Level Operation Plan for Counterinsurgency": 2.138, 2.411, 2.437

Geography: of SVN, 3.452. *See also* Republic of (South) Vietnam

Germany: rearmament of, 1.420; U.S. policy toward, 1.425. *See also* Federal Republic of Germany

Gia Dinh Province: 2.150, 2.524

Gia Lam Airfield: 4.215

Giang Province: 2.559

Gilpatric Task Force: 2.2, 2.7–8, 2.33, 2.39; downgrading of, 2.43; draft report of, 2.32, 2.35, 2.63; final report of, 2.44, 2.107, 2.110; first phase of, 2.35; Laos Annex to report, 2.8, 2.31, 2.40–43, 2.65; objectives stated in report, 2.51; Operations Officer for, 2.38; redrafts of report, 2.9, 2.43–44

Glassboro, N.J.: Johnson-Kosygin summit meeting at, 4.187

"Goldberg reply": on bombing halt, 4.389

Government of (South) Vietnam (GVN): 2.5, 3.1, 3.79; and Buddhist crisis, 2.732–733, 4.86 (*see also* Buddhist crisis); budget of, 2.279, 2.757, 2.761; constitution of, 2.555; counterinsurgency effort of, 2.692, 2.697, 2.713; courts, 2.398; democracy in, 2.550, 2.552; as dictatorship, 2.723; economy of, 2.710–711, 2.721–722, 3.531, 4.377; and elections, 1.164, 4.390; guerrilla warfare and, 4.298; and increased pressure on NVN, 3.77–79; inefficiency of, 3.57, 3.60, 3.207; instability of, 2.28, 2.343, 2.715, 3.21–22, 3.40, 3.79–83, 3.95, 4.309, 4.391, 4.504–505; 4.609; Komer's recommendations for, 4.440–441; maritime operations of, 3.250–251, 3.252–253, 3.288; military draft of, 3.59, 4.598–599; military forces of, 3.62, 3.249; military operations of, 2.702–704 (*see also* Army of the Republic of Vietnam); morale of, 2.503, 3.432; and National Reconciliation, 2.608; national unity and, 2.344; NSC working group on, 3.651–656; officials of, 4.351; organizational reform of, 2.450; and pacification, 2.619, 2.622 (*see also* Pacification); and partition, 1.163; popular image of, 2.679, 2.680; popular support for, 2.403, 2.593, 2.681, 3.19; possible collapse of, 3.293–294, 3.425–426, 3.652–653, 3.696; reforms of, 3.90–92, 4.568, 4.584; relations with U.S., 2.17, 2.33, 2.290–303, 2.345, 3.99, 3.421; request for U.S. aid, 2.652, 3.715; reserves of, 4.579; Rural Program, 3.88 (*see also* RD); rural support of, 2.595; secret police of, 2.744; Special Forces of, 2.638; Urban Program, 3.88; U.S. advisory role, 3.99, 3.259 (*see also* Advisors, U.S.; Advisory effort); U.S. aid to, 2.640, 3.2, 3.4, 3.30, 3.36, 3.103 (*see also* Aid: economic; Aid: military; Agency for International Development); U.S. attitudes toward, 2.353, 2.354, 2.357, 3.2, 3.259; U.S. pressure on, 4.575; as U.S. puppet, 2.738; U.S. recognition of, 1.367; U.S. role in, 2.714–715, 2.803, 3.29, 3.107, 4.489; villages controlled by, 2.157, 4.387; weakness of, 4.342. *See also* Diem government; South Vietnam; United States, objectives in Vietnam

Graduated Overt Military Pressure: concept of, 3.508, 3.510; program of, 2.195, 2.459; against DRV, 3.246, 3.270, 3.289; CINCPAC on, 3.318. *See also* Military operations

Graduated reprisals: 3.393; objectives of, 3.316; Taylor's concept of, 3.315–318. *See also* Reprisal actions; Sustained reprisals

Gravel mines: 4.335

Great Britain: 3.257; on Chinese intervention, 1.479; on collective defense in SE Asia, 1.99; on CPR, 1.174–175; at Geneva Conf., 1.550; opposition to military intervention, 1.477, 1.480; SEATO and, 2.78; support for France in Indochina, 1.11, 1.18; terrified by H-bomb, 1.501; on united action in Indochina, 1.101–103; Vietnam policy and, 2.116

Great Vietnam Nationalist Party (Dai Viet): 1.44, 1.314–315, 2.709

Greece: defense of, 1.615

Green Berets: 2.51. *See also* Counterinsurgency; Special Forces

Griffin Mission: 1.66, 1.371, 1.372, 1.195. *See also* Griffin, Robert Allan

Ground forces, U.S.: 2.361, 3.6, 3.239, 3.266, 3.421–422; and air support, 3.549; build-up of, 3.430–431, 3.433–483; Bundy on, 3.431; chronology, 4.277–290; combat operation of, 3.461; commitment of, 3.397–417, 3.460; counter-guerrilla role, 3.419; deployment of, 3.226, 3.393, 3.420–421, 3.458, 3.703; and enclave strategy, 3.394; increase in, 3.445–446; introduction of, 2.358, 3.297, 3.394, 3.705; Kennedy on, 2.116, 2.118–119; maximum estimate of, 2.108–109, 2.112; objectives, 3.428–429, 3.432, 3.439; program for, 3.698–699; projected commitment of, 2.97, 2.103–106; and ROLLING THUNDER, 3.397; search and destroy, 3.395, 4.369; strategy, 3.394, 4.478, 4.564, 4.599, 4.604; strength of, 3.461; U.S. Army position paper on, 1.93; U.S. white paper on, 2.354. *See also* U.S. Forces; Troops, U.S.
Ground war: entrance into, 2.358. *See also* Ground forces, U.S.
"Group 2" formula: 1.143. *See also* Southeast Asia: collective defense of
Guam Conference: 2.400, 2.511, 2.516, 4.150–154, 4.424–427
Guantanamo Defense Force: 4.540
Guerrilla force: Philippine, 2.647; of RVNAF, 3.63, 3.70, 3.509. *See also* Counterinsurgency; Guerrilla warfare; Viet Nam Cong-San
Guerrilla warfare: 2.692, 2.825–826, 3.381; difficulties of, 2.123; and food supply, 4.301; Rostow paper on, 3.381–383; success of, 2.14; VC, 2.20. *See also* Counterinsurgency; Guerrilla forces; Viet Nam Cong-San
Gulf of Tonkin. *See* Tonkin Gulf
GVN. *See* Government of (South) Vietnam

Haiphong: as bombing target, 3.177, 4.533; POL sites, 4.108; Viet Minh take-over of, 1.583
Haiphong harbor: closure of, 4.186; mining of, 3.199, 4.66, 4.445. *See also* Mining
Halberstam article: 3.23–24
Ha Long Bay Agreement, first: 1.27, 1.32, 1.58
Ha Long Bay Agreement, second: 1.27, 1.32, 1.58
Hamlet Evaluation System (HES): 2.504, 2.507
Hamlets: data on, 2.506; definition of, 2.133; elections councils, 2.687; under GVN control, 4.375; militia, 3.501, 3.506; RD teams in, 2.622; rehabilitation of, 3.505; strategic (*see* Strategic Hamlet Program). *See also* Hop Tac Program
Hancock: 3.302
Handicraft: 2.554
Hanoi: 3.152, 3.665; bombing of embassies in, 4.135; as bombing target, 4.533; civilian casualties in, 4.153; POL storage sites, 4.108; psywar strike, 1.578–579; restricted bombing, 4.208, 4.233; Viet Minh takeover of, 1.579. *See also* Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Hao paramilitary group: 1.582–583
HARDNOSE, Operation: 3.495
Harriman Committee on Foreign Aid: 1.35
Harris poll: on truce violations, 4.388; on U.S. support of bombing, 4.39, 4.144
Hau Nghia Province: 2.542
Hawks: 4.401, 4.559, 4.560. *See also* Public opinion
Hawk Units, U.S.: 2.331
Headquarters Field Force, Vietnam (FFORCEV): 2.478
Headquarters Support Activity Saigon (HSAS): 2.178; phase-out policy of, 2.179
Health Services: 2.676
Helicopter companies: 4.530
Helicopter deployments: under Program 4, 4.384
Helicopters: 2.101, 2.114; importance of, 4.539; introduction of, 2.17, 2.126, 2.127; requested by MAAG, 2.19; in SVN, 2.657; U.S. provision of, 2.455
Helicopter sorties: 4.370
Helicopter support: troop requirements and, 4.316
Helicopter units: 2.677
Herbicides: use of, 3.45
HES: 4.556
High Commissioner of Indochina: 1.21, 1.23, 1.25
Highlands: control of, 2.13. *See also* Countryside; MR5
High National Council (HNC): 2.277, 2.339, 3.583; appointment of, 2.336, 3.89; dissolution of, 2.277, 2.346–348, 2.351, 3.260, 3.292
High Plateau: 2.86, 2.91
HIGH PORT: 4.443

Highway 1: 3.425
"Hit and withdraw" operations: 2.721–723
Hoa Hao: 1.43, 1.45, 1.220, 1.294, 2.275, 2.460, 2.699, 2.709; anti-Diem activity, 1.305; clashes with Viet Minh, 1.294–295; defeat of, 1.303; influence of, 3.495; training of, 2.307, 2.308
Ho Chi Minh trail: 2.718, 4.110
Holbroke/Burnham Study on Vietnam: 4.512–513
Holding areas: 4.332
Holding phase: 3.191
Hon Matt Island: 3.554
Hon Me Island: 3.184, 3.519, 3.521, 3.544
Hon Ngu Island: 3.519, 3.521, 3.554
Hon Nieu Island: 3.184
Honolulu Conferences: Jan. 1962, 2.451; July 1962, 2.162, 2.164; May 1963, 2.180–181, 2.188, 2.190–191, 2.224; Nov. 1963, 2.273–276, 2.304; May–June 1964, 2.278–279, 2.318, 2.323, 2.467, 3.72, 3.76–77, 3.171, 3.177; Apr. 1965, 2.355, 2.357, 2.359, 2.475, 3.1, 3.57–59, 3.274, 3.451, 3.456, 3.458, 3.705, 4.311–315; Feb. 1966, 2.285, 2.289, 2.368–369, 2.485, 2.516–518, 2.548–554, 2.555–560, 2.561, 4.311–312, 4.646
Hop Tac Program: 2.331, 2.336, 2.343, 2.355, 2.481–482, 2.483, 2.516, 2.521–527, 3.97, 3.443, 3.533, 3.546, 3.551; assessment of, 2.524–526; dissatisfaction with, 2.355; end of, 2.483; during Khanh crisis, 2.335; launching of, 2.351; lessons of, 2.527; purpose of, 3.532; Ten Point Program, 2.530; U.S. support of, 2.529; Vietnamese support of, 2.524–526; Westmoreland on, 2.524. *See also* Pacification
Hot pursuit: 2.195, 3.186, 3.504, 3.570; into Cambodia, 3.552; concept of, 3.537, 3.551; use of, 3.572. *See also* Sanctuaries
House Armed Service Committee: reaction to war, 3.35
House of Representatives: on Vietnam policy, 4.263, 4.591
HSAS. *See* Headquarters Support Activity Saigon
Hué: 2.142; burning of U.S. Consulate in, 2.289, 2.377 (*see also* Buddhist crisis); and Tet offensive, 4.235; U.S. Consulate in, 2.289
Huk rebellion: 2.440
Humanité, L': 1.22
Hunger: in Southeast Asia, 2.58
"Hunting licenses": 2.445
Huong government: 2.347; fall of, 3.424; U.S. support of, 2.349

Ia Drang River Campaign: 4.622
ICA. *See* International Cooperation Administration
ICC. *See* International Control Commission
Ideology vs. reality: 2.684. *See also* Optimism; Pessimism
IMF. *See* International Monetary Fund
Immediate Action Program (IAP): 3.676–677
India: 2.799, 3.257, 4.582; neutrality of, 2.664
Indochina: 1.463, 2.819–820; anti-Japanese resistance in, 1.2, 1.12–13; balance of forces in, 1.491; cease-fire in, 1.141, 1.147–148; collective defense for, 1.131; Communist activity in, 1.192, 1.382, 1.433, 1.591; and domino theory 1.458, 1.179, 1.186, 1.473–476; and France, 1.2, 1.439, 2.819; Franco-American aid to, 1.190, 1.194; Franco-American position paper on, 1.554–555; Franco-British pact on, 1.18; Franco-Chinese agreement on, 1.18; Franco-Vietnamese negotiations on, 1.32–33; French coup d'etat, 1.18; French–DRV accord, 1.18–19; government of, 1.488–490; High Commissioner of, 1.21, 1.23, 1.25; Japanese occupation of, 1.8; justification of war in, 1.598; logistic situation in, 1.508; ministerial talks on, 1.390–391; nationalism of, 1.361; naval situation in, 1.494; political apathy in, 1.489; projected loss of, 3.178–179; strategic importance of, 1.362, 1.378, 1.418, 1.464, 1.475–476, 1.487–488; threat of Chinese intervention in, 1.84, 1.179, 1.187, 1.379; tripartite discussions on, 1.104–106, 1.227; U.S. economic aid to, 1.197, 1.408–410, 1.440; U.S. intervention in, 1.55–56, 1.511–512; U.S. military aid for, 1.66, 1.365–366, 1.380, 1.408–410, 1.468–471; U.S. military proposals for, 1.506, 1.511, 1.515; U.S. neutrality, 1.3; U.S. support of France in, 1.9, 1.15, 1.16–17; U.S. World War II policy toward, 1.1, 1.9; Viet Minh–dominated zones in, 1.189; Viet Minh resistance in, 1.18. *See also* Associated States of Indochina; Cam-

Indochina: (*cont'd*)
bodia; Laos; Republic of (South) Vietnam; Vietnam

Indochina War (1946–1954). *See* Franco–Viet Minh War

Indochinese Communist Party (ICP): 1.45; and the Viet Minh, 1.43–44

Indonesia: 1.3, 1.592; and Peking-Jakarta axis, 3.267

Infiltration: 2.344, 2.655–656, 3.158, 3.200, 3.244, 3.360, 3.674, 3.716, 4.381, 4.393; air strikes against, 4.133–134, 4.233, 4.337, 4.373–374, 4.410–412; barrier against, 4.416 (*see also* Barrier, anti-infiltration); Diem estimates of, 2.60; increase in, 3.192, 3.207–208, 3.211, 4.303–308, 4.334, 4.622; intelligence reports on, 3.255; into Mekong Delta, 3.29; and mining of ports, 4.415; pessimism about, 4.407; routes, 2.655–656, 3.251, 4.337, 4.517; statistics on, 4.417; Viet Cong, 2.8, 2.13, 3.31, 3.94; White Paper on, 3.330; withholding of data on, 3.256–257. *See also* Anti-infiltration; Barrier, anti-infiltration

Inflation, GVN: 2.389, 2.397, 2.400, 2.710, 4.338, 4.341–342; ARVN desertion rate and, 4.364, 4.377; and budget, 2.761; threat of, 2.310, 2.318; and U.S. commitment, 4.341; U.S. troop deployments and, 4.369. *See also* Piaster; War effort: financing of

Influence. *See* Leverage

Information Ministry: 2.237

Informers: 4.562

INR: 2.189, 3.31; on bombing escalation, 4.65; on SVN military situation, 2.164, 2.189. *See also* Central Intelligence Agency, U.S.; Intelligence System; National Intelligence Estimate

Inspection team: 2.382

Institute for Defense Analyses, JASON division of: on failure of bombing, 4.111. *See also* JASON Summer Study

Insurgency, Viet Cong: 2.19. *See also* Counterinsurgency; Counterinsurgency Plan; Viet Nam Cong-San

Intelligence, U.S.: 2.640, 3.609; efforts to improve, 3.32–35; inadequacy of, 3.158; on infiltration, 3.255; on NVN leaders, 4.57; on NVN reaction to air strikes, 3.174–175; photographic, 2.641; requirements, 3.182–183; unreliable sources of, 1.266. *See also* Central Intelligence Agency, U.S.; INR; Intelligence system; National Intelligence Estimates

Intelligence Advisory Committee: Indochina assessment of, 1.391–404, 1.429–433

Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX): 2.585

Intelligence Evaluation Center: 2.653

Intelligence Organizations: indigenous, 2.683–684

Intelligence system: 1.416, 2.189; inadequacy of, 2.164–165, 2.224, 2.280, 2.287, 3.23–34; military-political, 2.89, 2.114, 3.2. *See also* Central Intelligence Agency, U.S.; INR; Intelligence, U.S.; National Intelligence Estimates

Inter-Agency Committee for Province Rehabilitation: 2.148

Interdiction: 3.343, 3.359–360; analysis of, 2.722, 4.42–43; failure of, 4.49; infiltration and, 4.200, 4.202, 4.373–374; in Laos, 4.21; program of, 4.43; strategy, 4.70–71. *See also* Air strikes; Air war; Bombing; Bombing program; Infiltration

Inter-Ministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets (IMCSH): 2.144–145, 2.148, 2.674. *See also* Strategic Hamlet Program

International Control Commission (ICC): 1.249, 1.567, 2.17, 2.119, 2.127, 2.712, 4.662; Communist infiltration and, 2.712; Laos and, 2.636; member states of, 1.159; powers of, 1.159; relationship to Joint Commission, 1.159; report of, 2.814–815, 2.826; in SVN, 2.652

International Cooperation Administration (ICA): 2.7, 2.32, 2.34

International Jaycees: and Operation Brotherhood, 2.648. *See also* Operation Brotherhood

International Law: on collective defense in SVN, 4.645

International Monetary Fund (IMF): program for GVN, 2.382–383

International Supervisory Commission: 1.572–573, 1.607–608. *See also* Elections, all-Vietnam

Intersector V: 2.655

Intervention, Chinese: 1.54, 1.456, 1.462, 1.512–513; U.S. reaction to, 1.442

Intervention, U.S.: 1.506, 1.523; contingencies of, 1.463; Diem and, 2.446; early policy on, 2.431; and Geneva

Conf., 1.524; objectives of, 1.465–466; political considerations for, 1.467; State Dept. and, 2.9. *See also* U.S. Vietnam policy
Interzone V Regional Committee (IVRC): 2.694
Iran: and Vietnam policy, 2.78
Iron Curtain: 2.829
Iron Triangle: 4.408, 4.418
ISA: 2.162–163, 2.180–181, 4.221, 4.235, 4.555; on bombing, 4.204, 4.218, 4.256–257, 4.260; on covert activities, 3.571–575; DPM of, 4.561–568; on JCS Course A, 4.508; mining Haiphong and, 4.257–258; negotiations and, 4.263; on troop commitment, 2.106; withdrawal plan and, 2.182

J2: estimate of NVA/VC, 4.518–520
J3: estimates of military situation, 4.522
Japan: 1.627; on bombing of Hanoi, 4.614; and communism, 1.386, 1.436, 1.450; economy of, 1.375; rearmament of, 1.420
JASON study, of December 1967: 4.222–225, 4.231; on bombing campaign, 4.115, 4.224–225; on infiltration, 4.356
JASON Summer Study: 4.116–117; on barrier concept, 4.115; on bomb damage in North, 4.354–355
JCRR: 2.405
JCS. *See* Joint Chiefs of Staff
Jen-min jih-pao: 1.148, 1.153. *See also People's Daily*
Johnson administration: 2.160, 2.190, 4.269, 4.630; bombing estimate, 4.231–232; bombing policy of, 4.203; hawks vs. doves and, 4.138; justification of war, 3.707–3.743, 4.626–630; and Khanh Coup, 3.268; on role of advisors, 2.308; San Antonio formula of, 4.205–210; Southeast Asia commitment, 3.188; summary of policy, 3.710–713; Tet offensive and, 4.232; on triumvirate, 2.339–340; troop question and, 4.187; and U Thant, 4.136. *See also* Johnson, Lyndon B.
Johnson Mission: 2.55–59. *See also* Johnson, Pres. Lyndon B.
Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman. *See* Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)
Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS): 1.90, 2.3–5, 2.7, 2.9; advisory effort of, 1.215, 2.408, 2.432, 2.463, 2.467, 2.470; on aircraft losses, 3.334; on air/naval war, 3.193, 4.499–501; on allied deployments, 3.258; "Alternative Courses of Action for Southeast Asia," 4.492; on anti-infiltration barrier, 4.114, 4.413; bombing policy of, 3.35, 3.165–166, 3.179, 3.193, 3.209, 3.232, 3.263, 3.271, 3.288–289, 3.297, 3.343, 3.628, 3.629–630, 4.24, 4.33, 4.38, 4.41, 4.59–62, 4.67, 4.127–128, 4.132, 4.185, 4.254–256; on bombing targets, 3.273, 4.60–61, 4.75, 4.81, 4.533; on Course A strategy, 4.508–509; on covert activities, 4.590; on domestic reaction, 4.495–496, 4.499–500; on escalation, 4.145–146, 4.177; eight-week program of, 3.318–321, 3.427; on expansion, 2.358, 4.76; on force requirements, 2.78–79, 2.181, 4.131, 4.170, 4.326–327, 4.346, 4.431–432, 4.436–438, 4.524, 4.536, 4.572; on Franco-Viet Minh negotiations, 1.115–116, 1.118; on Geneva Conf., 1.118, 1.448–451; against holiday truces, 4.141; Indochina policy of, 1.198–200, 1.366, 1.373–374; on interdiction, 4.70–71, 4.215–216; issue of authority, 1.447; on Laos, 2.74, 3.159, 3.165; on LOC targets, 3.273; on MACV CPSVN, 2.179; memo to Sec. McNamara on air war, 4.210–214; memo of 29 March 1954 to Presidential committee, 1.455–460; memos of May 1954 for Sec. of Defense, 1.509–515; memo to Pres. Johnson, 4.211; on military aid, 1.195–196, 1.364; military assessments of, 2.654–659, 3.154, 4.539, 4.572–573; military objectives of, 3.172, 4.395, 4.536, 4.598–601; on NLF contacts, 4.394; on NSAM-288, 3.56; on NSC Working Group options, 3.233; OPLAN 37-64, 3.157–158; pacification and, 2.572, 2.599, 3.44–45; on POL, 4.60–61, 4.75, 4.81; PRACTICE NINE Requirements Plan, 4.412–413; and Program 5, 4.529–530; reaction to Galbraith, 2.672; reserve call-up and, 4.124, 4.238, 4.347, 4.385, 4.544–545; on ROLLING THUNDER, 4.86–87, 4.358; Rostow's proposal and, 2.73–74; on SEACABIN, 4.222; on Southeast Asia, 1.187, 1.363–366, 4.211; Special Studies Group of, 4.291–294; strategy against NVN, 3.208, 3.213–214; strategy debate among, 3.397; suppression of information, 4.180; on Systems Analysis arguments, 4.132; requirements of, 4.525; Tet offensive

Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS): (*cont'd*) and, 4.235; three-division plan of, 3.468–469; time-phasing proposal of, 3.162; and Tonkin crisis, 3.202–203; on troop commitment, 2.65, 3.428, 3.469; on troop deployment, 2.46, 2.48–49, 4.318–319, 4.394; 12-week air strike program, 3.343–344; on U.S. policy, 3.550; on Vietnamese capabilities, 4.302; on VNA force levels, 1.216–218; withdrawal plan of, 2.183; Worldwide Posture Paper, 4.490. *See also* Joint Chiefs of Staff Cables; Joint Chiefs of Staff Memoranda

Joint Chiefs of Staff Cables: to CINCPAC, 2.41–42; 2084/80, 3.517; 2343/326-6, 3.510; 3796, 3.517; 5375, 3.510; 7700, 3.517. *See also* Joint Chiefs of Staff Memoranda

Joint Chiefs of Staff Memoranda (JCSM): 97-67, 4.412–413; 208-67, 4.435; 218-66, 4.319; 218-67, 4.436–438; 284-67, 4.489–492; 288-67, 4.501; 311-61, 2.49; 312-67, 4.505; 321-65, 3.469–470; 506-66, 4.325; 555-67, 4.210–214; 590-65, 3.477; 629-63, 2.182; 646-66, 4.347; 652-65, 4.299–301; 702-66, 4.361–362, 4.364; 717-61, 2.12; 729-64, 3.555; 811-65, 4.302; 955-64, 3.258, 3.628; "Deployment of Forces to Meet CY Requirements," 4.361–362, 4.364; "Increased Pressures on North Vietnam," 4.210–214; to LBJ, 4.127–129; to Sec. McNamara, 2.663, 2.671–672, 3.563–564; on optimum force requirements, 4.492; "Operations Against North Vietnam," 4.489–492; "Strategic Assessment of Southeast Asia," 1.363–366; support for ground troop involvement, 3.458; "U.S. Military Participation in Indochina," 1.126–127

Joint command: approaches to, 2.359, 2.478; COMUSMACV opposition to, 2.475, 2.476, 2.478; concept of, 2.357; JCS and, 2.361; Gen. Minh and, 2.360; Amb. Taylor and, 2.360; Sec. McNamara's support of, 2.480; opposition to, 2.413

Joint Experts Report: 2.106

JGS. *See* Joint General Staff, Vietnamese

Joint General Staff, Vietnamese (JGS): 2.28, 2.29, 2.162, 2.177, 2.393, 4.221; bombing assessment of, 4.218; Directive A-B 139 of, 2.352; numbers of, 2.513; target evaluation by, 4.204; as U.S. puppets, 2.736

Joint Operations Center (JOC): 2.177

Joint (US-GVN) Operations Center (JOC): 2.689

Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAC): 2.538; OCO and, 2.612, 2.614; reorganization of, 2.606; and roles and missions report, 2.586

Joint War Games Agency: 4.291

Jorden report: 2.119, 3.255; release of, 2.115–116

JSOP-70: 3.428

JUNGLE JIM squadron: 2.79–80, 2.653, 2.657

Junks: NVN, 3.252; and VC infiltration, 2.696; Vietnamese, 2.8, 2.39, 2.198, 2.638

JUSPAC. *See* Joint United States Public Affairs Office

Kansas City Star: 3.307

KANZUS Force: 4.334

Ken Tuong Province: 3.26

Kennedy administration: chronology of commitment in Vietnam, 2.5–17; on Diem coup, 2.261, 2.263; foreign policy of, 2.72, 2.829; justification of war, 2.794–797; leverage on GVN, 2.252; optimism of, 2.204; public statements of, 2.794–797; and Taylor report, 2.103–104. *See also* Kennedy, Pres. John F.

Khanh coup: 2.278, 2.458, 3.35, 3.37, 3.41, 3.81; response to, 3.34, 3.37–38, 3.41

Khanh government: 2.195–196, 2.472; and Buddhists, 3.86–87; charter, 3.83–84; collapse of, 2.335–336, 3.4–5; constitution of, 2.279, 2.333; Constitutional Assembly, 2.318, 2.377, 2.384, 2.395; demonstrations against, 3.85–87; French plot and, 3.38; instability of, 2.309, 2.312, 2.318, 2.329–330, 2.332, 3.57, 3.81, 3.83, 3.192, 3.499, 3.502, 3.525, 3.546–548, 3.560–561; and NSAM-288 recommendations, 3.62–64; and pacification, 3.61; Taylor report on, 3.530–533; U.S. aid to, 2.331, 3.84–85; U.S. support of, 2.313–315, 2.323, 2.328, 2.334, 3.4, 3.53–54, 3.58, 3.78–79, 3.504, 3.508. *See also* Khanh, Gen. Nguyen

Khe Sanh: defense of 4.565; VC at, 4.547, 4.556

Khmer Issarak Forces: 1.111

Kidnapping: as terrorist tactic, 2.646, 2.697. *See also* Terrorism

Killed in action (KIA): 4.558; Ameri-

can, 4.455; Viet Cong, 4.348. *See also* Casualties
Kill ratios: 4.370, 4.387; ARVN, 4.425
"Kits": concept of, 2.717
"Komergrams": 2.569. *See also* Komer, Amb. Robert
"Komer Package": optimism of, 4.441. *See also* Komer, Amb. Robert
Kong Le-type coup: 2.716
Kontum area: 2.138
Korea: and U.S. commitment to SVN, 2.78. *See also* Korean War; South Korea
Korean War: 1.83–84, 3.725, 3.740; armistice, 1.595; and Indochina, 1.372, 1.374; truce, 1.415
Kra Isthmus: 1.377
Krulak-Mendenhall mission: 2.205, 2.243–244, 2.245
Kuang-ming jih-pao: 1.148
Ky coup: 2.362, 2.480. *See also* Ky, Marshall Nguyen Cao
Ky government: 4.622; bombing pause and, 4.36; stability of, 4.292; as U.S. puppet, 4.170; and U.S. troop commitment, 2.362. *See also* Ky, Marshall Nguyen Cao

Labor unions: political power of, 2.204
Lai Khe plantation: 2.149
Lam Dong Province: Montagnards in, 2.687. *See also* Montagnards
Land artillery: strategy of, 4.421, 4.422
Land reform: 1.388, 2.400, 2.551, 2.554, 2.569, 3.45; under Diem, 1.254–255, 1.309–310; and Tam gov't, 1.394; under Viet Minh, 1.308
Language difficulties: 2.346, 2.359, 2.475
Laniel government: 1.407. *See also* Laniel, Premier Joseph
Laniel-Navarre Plan. *See* Navarre Plan
Lansdale Report: 2.7, 2.442. *See also* Lansdale, Maj. Gen. Edward G.
Lao Armed Forces (FAL): 2.646. *See also* Laos
Lao Dong Party: 2.820; Resolution of Fifteenth Plenum, 1.264; Third National Congress, 1.264; unity of leadership in, 1.262. *See also* Communist Party, North Vietnamese
Laos: 3.257, 3.296, 3.316, 3.681; agreement with GVN, 3.160; air operations in, 2.344, 3.165–166, 3.195–197, 3.514, 3.515–516, 3.523–524, 3.543, 3.629, 4.535, 4.595; air reconnaissance over, 3.181–182; armed reconnaissance in, 3.160, 3.251, 3.253–254; border operations, 2.89, 2.142, 2.195, 2.327; cease-fire, 2.3, 2.6, 2.42, 2.47, 2.810–812, 3.197; Communist offensive against, 2.22, 2.33, 2.42, 3.165–166 (*see also* Pathet Lao; Plaine des Jarres); Communist threat to, 1.537, 4.582 (*see also* Pathet Lao); conference on, 2.330, 3.171, 3.197, 3.523, 3.684, 3.691 (*see also* 14-Nation Conference; Geneva Conference, 1962); contingency plans for, 2.672–673; covert activity in, 2.276, 2.653, 3.195–196, 3.254, 3.508, 3.610; cross border air operations, 3.156–157; cross border ground operations, 3.156–157, 3.190, 3.195–197, 3.502, 3.539–540, 3.585; and Dien Bien Phu, 1.485; DRV infiltration, 3.250, 4.295, 4.517; Eisenhower administration and, 2.636; expansion of war into, 4.491–492; 14-nation declaration on, 2.162, 2.174–175; French Union and, 1.397; and Geneva Conference, 1.136–139, 1.154–157, 1.535; ground operations in, 3.195–196, 3.498, 3.524, 3.535; GVN troops in, 3.585, 4.443–444; and Honolulu Conference, 3.174 (*see also* Honolulu Conference: June 1964); independence of, 1.593; JCS on, 2.74, 3.158–159; and JCS Program A, 4.421; JCS Rules of Engagement, 3.570–571; JFK and, 2.806, 2.807, 2.819; neutralist faction in, 2.51; neutrality of, 2.174, 2.819; NSAM 249 on, 2.726; NVA/VC buildup in, 4.519; Operation HIGH PORT, 4.443; Panhandle operations, 3.527, 3.536, 3.547, 3.550, 3.552, 3.563–565, 3.576; population of, 2.819; projected targets in, 3.566–568; as sanctuary, 4.337, 4.527; State-ISA on, 3.159; tripartite negotiations, 2.75, 3.197–198, 3.525, 3.528, 3.534; U.S. embarrassment in, 2.55; and U.S. ground forces, 2.22, 4.485–486; U.S. negotiations with, 3.159–160, 4.444; U.S. objectives in, 3.518–519; U.S. policy in, 2.31, 2.32–33, 3.526, 3.535; and U.S. Vietnam policy, 2.1, 2.22–23, 2.39, 2.44, 2.51, 2.56, 2.63, 2.97, 2.109, 2.112, 2.116, 2.118–119, 2.146, 2.161, 2.174, 2.193; Viet Cong infiltration, 2.175, 2.696; Viet Minh invasion of, 1.86
Laos annex. *See* Gilpatric Task Force: Laos annex to report
Laotian corridor. *See* Laos: DRV infiltration; Laos: Viet Cong infiltration

Last Reflections on a War: 1.1
Latin America: 4.636
Leaflets: dropping of, 2.641. *See also* Propaganda
League for the Independence of Vietnam. *See* Viet Nam Doc Lap Dongh Minh Hoi
Legality: of Thailand move, 2.812–813; of U.S. efforts in SV, 4.651
LeTourneau-Allard plan: 1.410
"Let's Go." *See* Operation Dang Tein; Operation Let's Go
Leverage: 2.478–480, 2.498, 2.501–504, 4.578; French, 1.53–54; Katzenbach on, 2.592; McNamara position on, 2.480; PROVN study on, 2.501; State Dept. study on, 2.404–406
Levy case: 4.388
"Liberation Army": of VC, 2.655
Lien Minh: 1.578
Lien Viet: 1.46
LIMDIS 19118: 3.438–440
"Limited Holding Actions in Southeast Asia": 2.75
Limited partnership: 2.94, 2.104, 2.128–129, 2.137, 2.147, 2.153, 2.409–410, 2.449, 2.450, 2.452, 2.498, 2.652–653. *See also* Advisors, U.S.; Advisory effort
Locarno: 1.142, 1.143. *See also* Southeast Asia: collective defense of
LOC-cut: concept of, 3.273. *See also* Targets: LOC as
Long An Province: 2.150, 3.28, 3.30; counterinsurgency in, 2.310; USOM report on, 2.481
Long Toan District: 3.26
Los Angeles Times: 4.266, 4.592
Lottery scandal: 2.706

MAAG. *See* Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACCORDS: 2.404, 2.406, 2.575
MACV. *See* Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
Maddox, USS: 2.329, 3.182–185, 3.519, 3.521, 3.719. *See also* Tonkin Gulf crisis
MAF. *See* Marine Corps, U.S.: amphibious force
Malaya: 2.650; insurgency in, 2.164; U.S. economic aid to, 1.441
Malay Federation: 2.818
Malaysia: 3.267
Mandate for Change: 1.146
Manifesto of the Eighteen. *See* Caravelle Manifesto
Manila Conference: 2.287, 2.387–388, 2.516, 2.519, 2.600, 2.607, 2.609; Joint Communique of, 4.394; Asst. Sec. McNaughton at, 4.360; Gen. Westmoreland at, 4.360
Manila Pact: 1.212, 2.42, 2.45, 3.719. *See also* Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
Manpower: U.S. needs for, 1.422–423. *See also* Mobilization, U.S.; Troops, U.S.
Mansfield mission: 2.816; report of, 2.225
Mansfield Report: 1.222–223
Mansfield Resolution: 4.455
MAP. *See* Military Assistance Program
"Marching North": concept of, 3.512, 3.531
Marine Corps, U.S. (USMC): 2.178; amphibious force, 2.517, 2.533; battalion landing teams, 2.472; casualties of, 3.460; Combined Action Companies, 2.400; at Da Nang, 2.331, 2.356, 3.5, 3.96, 3.389–390, 3.417, 3.418–419, 3.423, 3.431, 3.433, 3.450 (*see also* Da Nang); deployment of, 2.355, 4.540, 4.543; Fifth Division, 4.549; helicopter unit, 2.179; involvement in local politics, 2.536; 9th Amphibious Brigade, 4.531; and pacification, 2.528; and reserve call-up, 4.645; rifle squads, 2.476; seaborne, 2.783, 2.789; successes of, 2.533; TAOR of, 3.459; and Taylor, 3.455
Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF): III, 2.355, 4.544; IV, 4.546. See also Marine Corps, U.S.
Marines, RVN: 2.656
Maritime operations (Marops): 3.92, 3.203, 3.606, 3.680, 3.682
Market Time area: 4.538
Marops. *See* Maritime operations
Marshall Plan: 2.747
"Masher" movements: 2.552. *See also* Operation MASHER
MAYFLOWER: 3.274, 3.378. *See also* Bombing program; Project Mayflower
McNamara-Taylor mission: 2.184–189, 2.247–252, 2.256, 3.20, 3.27; recommendations of, 2.205–206, 2.254–255, 2.274; report of, 2.164, 2.751–766, 3.47. *See also* Taylor mission
MDAP. *See* Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MEDCAP program: 2.358, 3.427
Media: 3.23; on Da Nang landing, 3.426; Ky's use of, 2.371. *See also* Credi-

bility gap; News media; Propaganda; Public opinion
Medical teams: 2.551
MEF: 2.355, 4.544. *See also* Marine Corps, U.S.
Mekong Delta: 2.138, 2.141, 2.177, 2.570; conditions in, 2.275; military problems in, 2.186, 2.249; pacification in, 2.129, 2.140, 2.142, 2.144, 2.146, 2.148–150, 2.674, 2.677, 2.679, 2.681, 2.707, 2.720; priority of, 3.18, 3.23, 3.25, 3.27; RVNAF in, 4.565; Viet Cong in, 2.254, 2.695, 3.495; war in, 2.231, 2.243, 2.245, 2.248, 2.250, 2.276, 2.303, 2.305, 3.499. *See also* Corps, IV
Mekong River: controls on, 3.551–552; flood, 2.14, 2.123
Mendenhall-Krulak mission: 3.20
Mendès-France government: 1.209. *See also* Mendès-France, Pierre
Meo tribes: 2.646–647
"Metropolitan France": 1.367
Middle East: 1.425
Middle-of-the-roaders: 4.559–560. *See also* Public opinion
Mid-May Briefing Book: 3.61
MIG: 3.335, 3.536, 3.547
Military Academy, Vietnamese: 2.510
Military and Political Actions Recommended for SVN: 4.623–624
Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAG): 1.108, 1.197, 1.523, 2.3, 2.7, 2.11, 2.438, 3.28; advisory teams of, 2.658 (*see also* Advisors, U.S.; Advisory effort); chief of, 2.70; counterinsurgency effort of, 2.19, 2.436; Diem's requests for, 2.446; early activities of, 2.433–2.435; expansion of, 2.62, 2.176; and Franco-Viet Minh War, 1.78, 1.456; French restrictions on, 1.200–201; Geneva limits on, 2.433; increase of, 2.8, 2.27, 2.34, 2.37–38, 2.90, 2.107, 2.453–454, 2.638; inspections by, 1.497; Johnson mission and, 2.59; and paramilitary forces, 2.434–435; phase-out policy of, 2.179; reduction of, 2.178; regional coordination of, 1.446; and Sec. of Defense, 2.469
Military Assistance Command, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (MAACORDS): 2.404, 2.406, 2.575
Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV): 2.177–178, 2.280, 2.335, 2.388, 2.456, 2.486, 3.29; on advisory effort, 2.287–288, 2.469; advisory requirements of, 2.513; airlift of, 2.373; and ARVN, 2.381, 4.466–467; on CIA-MACV Director of Intelligence, 2.586; civilian influence on, 2.487; Command History, 4.296, 4.304–305, 4.308, 4.406; and Diem coup, 2.783; Directive 525-4, 4.301; estimate of enemy forces, 4.381; expansion of, 2.462–463; failure of strategy, 4.386–387; force requirements of, 4.427, 4.514; GVN relations and, 2.364; on Hop Tac, 2.523; and Khanh coup, 2.354; Amb. Komer and, 2.620; Monthly Evaluation Reports of, 2.518, 2.545–548; operations, 4.333, 4.447–454; optimism of, 3.345; pacification and, 2.572–573, 2.587, 2.616, 3.442–443; pessimism of, 3.2; phase-out policy of, 2.179; PROVN report on, 2.578–579; and RD, 2.488–494, 2.593; reduction of, 2.176; reorganization of, 2.594, 2.620; requirements of, 4.320, 4.472, 4.584; and Sec. of Defense, 2.469, 3.70; statistics of, 2.771–780; "Summary of Highlights," 2.180; on training teams, 2.465–466; troop deployments and, 3.429; Gen. Wheeler on, 4.547
Military Assistance Program (MAP): 1.200, 2.160, 2.162, 2.474, 3.64; ceilings for, 2.176–177, 2.190, 2.197; decrease in, 2.164, 2.180–181; funds for, 2.253, 3.466; FY 64, 2.179, 2.190, 2.306; FY 65-69, 2.179, 2.191; 5-year projections of, 2.194; increase in, 2.163, 2.195, 2.275, 3.507; reshaping of, 2.801; SVN force estimate of, 2.181–182
Military Defense Assistance Act, 1949: 1.36
Military operations: chronology of, 3.117–149; increasing effectiveness of, 4.625; locations of, 4.411; 1968 options, 4.572; offensive, 1.510, 4.548, 4.563; overt action, 3.106, 3.161–162; paramilitary, 2.683; Phase I, 2.344, 3.5, 4.290, 4.296, 4.303; Phase II, 2.344, 2.350, 3.5, 4.296–297, 4.302, 4.305–307, 4.318–320, 4.322; Phase III, 4.296; political tension and, 2.760
Military pressures: covert, 3.108; objectives of, 3.270. *See also* Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam: U.S. military pressures on
Military procurement program: 4.455
Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC): 2.347, 3.17

Military Revolutionary Council (MRC): 2.207, 2.303, 2.333, 2.341, 3.32; as politicians, 2.307

Military solution: 4.588, 4.603–604

Military strategy, U.S.: 4.368–372; for borders and sanctuaries, 4.402; Course A, 4.481–486; Course B, 4.486–489; emphasis on pacification, 4.327; and JCS, 4.300; large unit operations, 4.408–409; McCone on, 3.101; mobile defense, 4.386 (*see also* Combined Campaign Plan, 1967); naval surface operations, 4.421–423; net and spear, 2.6, 2.24; political costs of, 3.201; possibilities of, 3.181; pressure against DRV, 3.84, 3.152–153, 3.169–170, 3.200, 3.215–220, 3.226, 3.232, 3.670; Gen. Westmoreland and, 3.176

Minh coup: 2.193, 2.200, 2.309

Minh government: and Buddhists, 2.306; and Catholics, 2.306; Sec. McNamara on, 3.494; political tension in, 2.308; U.S. recognition of, 2.207; U.S. support for, 2.275. *See also* Minh, Gen. Duong Van

Mining: aerial, 4.140; of DRV inland waterways, 4.212–213, 4.422; of DRV ports, 4.74, 4.173, 4.212, 4.243–244, 4.245, 4.415, 4.422–423, 4.485, 4.534; of Haiphong harbor, 4.257, 4.444–445; projected Sino-Soviet reaction to, 4.173, 4.485

Ministry of Revolutionary Development (MORD): 2.288, 2.562. *See also* RD

Ministry of Rural Construction (MRC): 2.365

Minorities: exploitation of, 2.683. *See also* Tribes

Minute of Understanding: 1.224–225

Missiles, SAM: 4.258, 4.535. *See also* Weapons

Mission Council: 2.515, 2.537–2.538. *See also* Country Team; Saigon Embassy

Mobile Advisory Logistics Teams (MALTS): 2.513

Mobile Advisory Teams (MATS): 2.513

Mobile Riverine Force (MRF): 4.473, 4.539

Mobile training teams: 2.464–465, 2.608

Mobilization, GVN: 3.53; Khanh's efforts at, 3.49, 3.59–60

Mobilization, U.S.: 1.466, 4.527; news media and, 4.511; public reaction to, 4.559. *See also* Troop deployments

Model M plan. *See* Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam: Model M Plan of

Mollet Government: 1.209

Montagnards: 2.77, 2.687, 3.18; casualties of, 2.772; Commandos, 2.721; discontent of, 2.339; dissidence among, 2.93, 2.339; GVN recruitment of, 2.678; resettlement of, 1.255, 1.312, 2.680, 2.687–688, 2.708; in Special Forces, 2.644; training of, 2.568, 2.717; Viet Cong and, 2.712

Morale, SVN: 2.705; and campaign against DRV, 2.329, 3.78, 3.84, 3.387, 3.546; and flood relief, 2.85, 2.88; loss of, 2.106, 2.111, 2.231, 2.312, 2.339, 3.94, 3.534; and U.S. military presence, 2.91, 2.93, 2.118. *See also* Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam: morale of

Morton, USS: 3.194

Moscow Declaration of 1960: 1.265

Movement for the Defense of Peace (MDP): 1.344

MRC. *See* Military Revolutionary Committee; Military Revolutionary Council; Ministry of Rural Construction

MTT: 2.466

"Mule Train": 2.178

Murday Report: 2.350

Mutual Aid Family Group: 1.312

Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP): forces supported by, 1.490–491; French restrictions of, 1.200–201; and French Union forces, 1.492; funds from, 1.370; Indochina war and, 1.515; 1949 appropriations under, 1.36

Mutual Security Program: 1.590, 1.622–624, 1.627

My Tho: 2.718, 2.724

Nambo Regional Committee (NRC): 2.694

Nambo sector: 2.655, 3.383

Nam Tha: attack on, 2.812

Napalm: 3.334–335, 3.514; in Laos, 3.254, 3.516. *See also* Weapons

National Assembly, SVN: 2.6; dissolution of, 2.271; elections of, 2.246–247, 2.252; power of, 2.634; U.S. troops and, 2.106

National Bank, RVN: 2.389

National Board of Estimates: on POL strikes, 4.62

National Campaign Plan (NCP): 2.176–177, 2.224

National Defense College: 2.510

National Directorate of Coordination: 2.646–647

National Executive Council: 2.101

National Government of Vietnam:

French departure and, 1.561. *See also* Vietnam
National Intelligence Estimates (NIE): on Chinese intervention, 1.187; on consequences of Dien Bien Phu, 1.482–487; on counterinsurgency effort, 2.164, 2.180, 2.224, 2.275, 2.276; on Diem coup, 2.69; on Diem gov't, 1.266–267, 1.297–298, 2.18, 2.20, 2.69–70; on political situation in SVN, 4.391–392; Probable Developments in Indochina through mid-1954, 1.391–404; Probable Developments in Vietnam to July 1956, 1.297; on SEATO force commitment, 2.77; on VC/PAVN strength, 2.75, 4.302, 4.325. *See also* SNIE
Nationalist China. *See* Republic of China
Nationalist Party of Vietnam (VNQDD): 1.292, 2.709. *See also* Vietnamese National Party
National Leadership Committee: 3.434
National Liberation Front (of South Vietnam) (NLF): 2.364, 2.691, 2.693, 2.698; attack on U.S. officers billet, 3.262; Communist role in, 1.259, 1.341, 1.345; DRV control of, 1.265, 1.345–346, 4.304; DRV support of, 3.64; 8-point program of, 1.342; formation of, 1.258–259, 1.339–340; four-point manifesto of, 1.342–343; international support for, 2.713; leadership of, 1.343–344; Liberation Army of, 1.259, 1.345; membership of, 1.259; military success of, 2.363–364; neutralist coalition, 3.207; organization of, 1.344; post-Diem policy statement of, 2.273–274; proposed role in GVN, 4.498; on reunification, 1.342–343; 10-point program of, 1.340. *See also* People's Revolutionary Party; Viet Nam Cong-San
National Mobilization Plan: 2.313; objectives of, 3.60; revised, 3.505, 3.509
National Pacification Plan. *See* Pacification Plan
National Police, GVN: 2.585; ARVN and, 2.495; force goals, 3.63; increase of, 3.506; and urban security, 4.557
National Press Club: 4.217
National Priority Areas: 2.483, 2.526, 4.379, 4.381; goals of, 2.540; Marines in, 2.535. *See also* Pacification
National Psychological Operations Plan: 3.45
National reconciliation: 2.388; proclamation of, 2.400. *See also* Chieu Hoi Program
National Revolutionary Civil Servants League (Lien Doan Cong Chuc Mang Quoc Gia): 1.302
National Revolutionary Congress of the Vietnamese people: 1.234
National Security Act: 3.49
National Security Action Memoranda (NSAM): no. 52, 2.49–50, 2.445, 2.446, 2.642–643; no. 65, 2.11; no. 111, 2.17, 2.117, 2.174, 2.410, 2.449, 2.454; no. 124, 2.660; no. 131, 2.667–669; no. 132, 2.666–667; no. 157, 2.672–673; no. 162, 2.681–684; no. 182, 2.689–690; no. 249, 2.726; no. 263, 2.769–770; no. 273, 2.207, 2.276, 2.457, 3.2, 3.17–19, 3.22, 3.28, 3.496; no. 288, 2.163, 2.277, 2.411–412, 2.459–461, 2.463, 2.577, 3.3–4, 3.6, 3.18, 3.46, 3.50–56, 3.57, 3.61, 3.287, 4.300, 4.500; no. 314, 2.338, 2.342, 3.88, 3.196, 3.236; no. 328, 3.6, 3.97, 3.100, 3.352, 3.447–448, 3.454, 3.702–703; no. 343, 2.518–519, 2.567–568; no. 362, 4.470; on air/naval war against DRV, 3.88, 3.245–246; ground troop commitment, 3.447–448; on Khanh gov't, 3.56–57; on Laos, 3.88, 3.196, 3.245–246; and McCone, 3.100; on pacification, 3.61, 4.470–471; strategic guidelines for, 4.392; on troop deployment, 3.447
National Security Council, GVN: 2.327
National Security Council, U.S. (NSC): on Chinese intervention in Indochina, 1.84, 1.88, 1.187; on collective security in Asia, 1.38–40; consensus among, 3.236; on Diem coup, 2.238; on domino theory, 1.83–84, 1.86; on Franco-Viet Minh negotiations, 1.87; on Geneva Accords, 1.177; on Geneva Conference, 1.116–117, 1.118; Indochina report of, 1950, 1.361–362; on McNamara-Taylor mission, 2.189; on national security policy, 1.412–429; on SE Asia, 1.37–38, 1.375, 1.384–390, 1.435–443; on SE Asian communism, 1.76–77, 1.82, 1.186; on Soviet expansion, 1.185; Task Force Report, 2.49; on troop commitment, 2.47; on U.S. aid to Indochina, 1.194, 1.405–410; on U.S. intervention in Indochina, 1.91–92, 1.474; on U.S. objectives in Indochina, 1.198–200; on U.S. support of SVN, 1.267. *See also* National Security Council meetings;

National Security Council: (*cont'd*) National Security Council Working Group
National Security Council meetings: May 1954, 1.499–500; May 1961, 2.9; Oct. 1961, 2.13, 2.79–80; Nov. 1961, 2.116; Aug. 1963, 2.239, 2.240–241; Sept. 1963, 2.242–243, 2.246–247; Oct. 1963, 2.186, 2.187, 2.250–251, 2.257, 2.260; Nov. 1963, 2.191; March 1964, 2.196, 2.313; July 1964, 2.199; April 1965, 3.445–450
National Security Council papers: 2.101, 2.140, 2.188, 2.196; 48/1, 1.82; 48/2, 1.82; 64, 1.83, 1.187, 1.194; 64/1, 1.198–200; 124, 1.88; 124/2, 1.83–84, 1.384–390; 162/2, 1.88; 177, 1.91–92; 1074-a, 1.462–465; 5405, 1.86, 1.87, 1.434–443, 1.452, 1.472, 1.474
National Security Council Working Group: 3.210, 3.288, 3.630; "Action for SVN," 3.598–601; on Chinese expansionism, 3.218; "Courses of Action in SEA," 3.588–590, 3.610–619, 3.619–621, 3.621–622, 3.622–628, 3.630–632; deviation from findings of, 3.246; divergent views within, 3.217–220; on DRV resolve, 3.213, 3.215; existing policy objectives for SE Asia, 3.216; fallback policy objectives for SE Asia, 3.216–217; formation of, 3.210; on ground force commitments, 3.426–427; on GVN instability, 3.212; intelligence estimate of, 3.651–656; JCS views, 3.231; membership of, 3.210; on military pressure against DRV, 3.211, 3.221–225; on negotiations, 3.225–228; projected reaction to policy, 3.228–231; Rostow on, 3.234; on strategic importance of SVN, 3.219–220; tasks of, 3.211
National Training Center: 2.351
National union: 1.57. *See also* Unification
National United Front: 1.120
National War College: 2.669
"Nation building": 4.329
NATO. *See* North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Naval surface operations: 4.421–423
Navarre Plan: 1.86, 1.410–411, 1.434, 1.437, 1.495. *See also* Franco–Viet Minh War
Navy, French: 1.404
Navy, RVN: 2.653, 2.656
Navy, U.S. *See* United States Navy
Negotiations: 3.239, 3.247, 3.288, 3.332, 3.351, 3.391, 3.611, 3.660, 3.664, 3.672, 3.696, 3.699; alternative forms of, 3.589; Wm. Bundy on, 4.446–447; Chinese involvement and, 4.59; and Clifford Group, 4.241; danger of prolonging, 3.248; DRV on, 4.169, 4.233, 4.480; Four-Point Plan, 3.247; international diplomatic moves, 3.346–347; international support for, 3.188–189, 4.54; and ISA, 4.264; JCS and, 4.357; military pressure and, 3.225–228; non-communist Asians on, 4.617–618; public pressure for, 3.354; Rusk and, 3.331; Soviet involvement and, 4.59; U.S. bargaining points and, 3.225–226, 3.246; U.S. terms, 3.167–168, 3.169–170, 3.227. *See also* Compromise solution
Neo-colonialism: 2.477
"Net and spear" concept: 2.6, 2.24
Neutral governments: Vietnam policy and, 2.113
Neutralism: 2.343, 3.39, 3.675
Neutralization: 3.496, 3.502–503, 3.511, 3.712; French support of, 3.188
Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission for Indochina: 1.140, 1.536. *See also* Cease-fire; International Control Commission
New Life Hamlets: 2.158. *See also* Strategic Hamlet Program
News media: on Buddhist crisis, 2.227; Bundy's criticism of, 3.309; on Pleiku reprisal actions, 3.307; on McNamara-Taylor Mission, 2.188; on mobilization, 4.511; on restraints, 2.306–307; USG secrecy and, 3.254, 3.256; on U.S. role in SVN, 3.25. See also *The New York Times;* Propaganda; Public opinion
New Vietnam Party: 1.44
Newsweek: 3.307
New York Daily News, The: 2.556, 4.389
New York Herald Tribune, The: 2.555–556
New York Post, The: 2.557
New York Times, The: 2.554, 2.556, 2.558–559, 3.307, 4.135, 4.262–263, 4.455, 4.512, 4.527; administration message in, 2.103; barred from Vietnam, 2.306; Diem interview with, 2.102; on Halberstam article in, 2.231, 3.23; on helicopter arrival, 2.126–127; Kennedy-Diem letters in, 2.17, 2.115; on Program 5, 4.527; questions on U.S. objectives, 3.263; Saigon Bureau chief of, 2.544; on Taylor Mission, 2.82; on troop deployment,

4.591; on Westmoreland's request, 4.585
New Zealand: 3.257; and bombing policy, 4.251; troop contributions of, 4.470, 4.524. *See also* ANZUS
NFLSV. *See* National Liberation Front of South Vietnam
Ngo family: 2.456; Lodge on, 2.790; power of, 2.790. *See also* Diem family; Nhu family; Nhu, Madame; Nhu, Ngo Dinh
Nguoi Viet Tu Do: 1.316
Nhan Dan: on partitioning of Indochina, 1.134; on San Antonio formula, 4.206, 4.233
Nha Trang: 2.10
Nhu family: 2.716; removal of, 2.740; U.S. attitude toward, 2.727, 2.737, 2.741. *See also* Diem family; Ngo family; Nhu, Madame; Nhu, Ngo Dinh
NIE. *See* National Intelligence Estimates
19th parallel: 3.288, 3.300, 3.318–319, 3.326, 3.335–336
"94 target list": 3.288
Ninh Thuan Province: 2.687
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): 1.36, 1.203, 1.419, 1.599; on compromise solution in SVN, 4.619; French in, 1.454
Northern Dai Viets: 1.578
Northern Highlands: 2.122
North Vietnam. *See* Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)
North Vietnamese Army (NVA): in DMZ, 4.479; in Laos, 4.683; in SVN, 4.683; threat of, 4.675. *See also* NVA/VC
NSAM. *See* National Security Action Memoranda
Nuclear test ban: 2.830
Nuclear testing: 2.816
Nuclear weapons: Chinese intervention and, 1.512; use of, 1.88, 1.466, 2.322, 3.65, 3.175, 3.238. *See also* Weapons
NVA/VC (also NVA/NLF): final annihilation phase of, 4.332; MR5 highlands and, 4.305; Main Forces campaign plan of, 4.518; strategy of, 4.321; Taylor on, 3.82. *See also* North Vietnamese Army; PAVN/VC; Viet Nam Cong-San
NVN. *See* Democratic People's Republic of (North) Vietnam

O'Daniel Mission: 1.411. *See also* O'Daniel, Gen. John W.
Office of Civil Operations (OCO): 2.393, 2.413, 2.486, 2.489; accomplishments of, 2.614; establishment of, 2.487, 2.516, 2.526, 2.564, 2.606, 2.609, 2.612; under MACV, 2.610; province representatives, 2.487, 2,613; Regional Directors, 2.487, 2.489, 2.520, 2.612; relations with Washington, 2.615; replacement of, 2.487
Office of Defense Mobilization: 1.423
Office of National Estimates: 4.52
Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD): 1.194, 2.470; and Clifford Group, 4.240; post-Tonkin crisis views, 3.199, 3.204–205; Systems Analysis: 2.383, 2.512 (*see also* Systems Analysis); terminates CPSUN, 2.197–198. *See also* Department of Defense, U.S.; McNamara, Robert S.
Office of Strategic Services (OSS): 1.7, 1.16
Oil: in SE Asia, 1.450
"Oil blot" concept: 2.482
"Oil spot" concept: 2.142, 2.313, 2.325, 2.464, 2.481, 2.522, 3.43–44, 3.505
Okinawa: 3.320; 1st Special Group on, 2.644, 2.646
Okinawa Station: 2.649
173rd Airborne Brigade: 3.450, 3.457–458
101st Airborne Division. *See* Airborne Division, 101st
Open Arms program: 2.481. *See also* Chieu Hoi program
Operation ADAMS: 4.409
Operation ATTLEBORO: 4.381
Operation BARREL ROLL. *See* BARREL ROLL
Operation BEAU CHARGER: 4.453
Operation BIRMINGHAM: 4.322, 4.334
Operation Black Virgin: 3.383
Operation Brotherhood (OB): 1.575–576, 2.640, 2.648
Operation BUCKSKIN: 4.322
Operation CEDAR FALLS: 2.609, 4.387, 4.408–409, 4.418; U.S. deaths from, 4.40
Operation CRAZY HORSE: 4.321
Operation CRIMP: 4.322
Operation Dang Tein: 2.150
Operation DANIEL BOONE: 4.535
Operation DAVEY CROCKETT: 4.321
Operation DECK HOUSE IV: 4.333
Operation DESOTO: 4.409, 4.447. *See also* DeSoto Patrols
Operation DOUBLE EAGLE I: 4.321
Operation DOUBLE EAGLE II: 4.321

Operation EL PASO II: 4.334, 4.381
Operation FAIRFAX: 2.483, 2.516, 4.409, 4.447; and pacification, 4.459
Operation FOOTBOY: 4.536
Operation FRANCES MARION: 4.452
Operation GADSTON: 4.447
Operation *Giai Phong:* 1.306
Operation Hai Yen II: 2.150, 2.686
Operation HARDNOSE: 3.495
Operation HARRISON: 4.321
Operation HASTINGS: 2.609, 4.333
Operation HICKORY: 4.453
Operation HIGH FORT: 4.443
Operation HOT SPRINGS: 4.321
Operation JUNCTION CITY: 2.609, 4.409, 4.447
Operation LAM SON: 4.453
Operation Let's Go: 2.702
Operation MALHEUR: 4.453
Operation MALLET: 4.322
Operation MARAUDER: 4.322
Operation MASHER: 4.321
Operation MASTIFF: 4.322
Operation Order FLAMING DART. *See* FLAMING DART
Operation OREGON: 4.321
Operation PAUL REVERE: 4.333
Operation PAUL REVERE II: 4.334
Operation PAUL REVERE III: 4.334
Operation PAUL REVERE IV: 4.381
Operation PERSHING: 4.447
Operation Phuong Hoang: 2.150
Operation PRAIRIE: 2.609, 4.333
Operation PRAIRIE IV: 4.453
Operation ROLLING STONE: 4.322
Operation Royal Phoenix: 2.702
Operation SAM HOUSTON: 4.447
Operation SEA SWALLOW: 2.674–675, 2.678, 2.701–702, 2.720
Operation SEINE: 4.409
Operation SILVER BAYONET: 4.304
Operation SILVER CITY: 4.322
Operation STARLIGHT: 3.461
Operation STEEL TIGER: 3.338, 3.341. *See also* BARREL ROLL
Operation Sunrise: 2.129, 2.144, 2.148–150, 2.152, 2.674–685, 2.701–702, 2.720; criticism of, 2.151
Operation Take-Off: 2.404
Operation TEXAS: 4.321
Operation THAYER II: 4.409, 4.447
Operation Triangle: 3.518
Operation UTAH: 4.321
Operation VAN BUREN: 4.321
Operation Vulture (Vautour): 1.97. *See also* Dien Bien Phu
Operation WHITE WING: 4.321
Operation YANKEE TEAM. *See* YANKEE TEAM
Operations Control (OPCON): 2.786
Operations Control Board (OCB): 1.177
Operations Coordinating Board (OCB): 1.217, 1.434
OPLAN: 32-64, 3.427; 33, 3.510; 37-64, 3.198, 3.287–288; 39-65, 3.636, 3.427; 99, 3.510
OPLAN 34A: 2.327–329, 2.331, 2.333, 3.183, 3.252, 3.316, 3.510–511, 3.525–526, 3.534, 3.536, 3.560, 3.562, 3.606, 3.671; acknowledgment of, 3.535; procedures of, 3.571; resumption of, 3.543–545, 3.547–548, 3.551–552, 3.565, 3.585; schedule of, 3.553–554
Optimism: 2.458–459, 3.24; of Sec. Acheson, 1.383; of Amb. Bunker, 4.516; of Forrestal, 2.717; of Gen. Harkins, 2.786–787; of Johnson Administration, 2.610; of Amb. Komer, 4.390–391; of Gen Krulak, 2.243; of Sec. McNamara, 2.224, 3.21; in NSAM 273, 3.19–20; about phase-out policy, 2.174–175, 2.180, 2.185, 2.187–188, 2.190, 3.17; of SACSA, 2.192; of Adm. Sharp, 4.228; of Amb. Taylor, 3.434–436; of Sir Robert Thompson, 2.225; of Gen. Westmoreland, 4.570
Option A: evaluation of, 3.228; provisions of, 3.223
Option B: evaluation of, 3.229; provisions of, 3.224
Option C: 3.227; evaluation of, 3.228, 3.230; provisions of, 3.224
"Oriental" approach: 2.503
OSD. *See* Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSD/ISA: 3.204
OSS. *See* Office of Strategic Services
"Other war": 2.98, 2.542, 2.556. *See also* Pacification
Overflights: of DRV, 2.641. *See also* Armed reconnaissance flights
Overseas Press Club: 4.217

Pacific area: security of, 2.57. *See also* Southeast Asia
Pacification: 2.313, 2.355, 2.362, 2.368, 3.321; administration of, 3.61, 3.89; and advisory effort, 2.467, 2.472 (*see also* Advisory effort); analysis of, 2.356, 2.366, 2.378–390, 2.507; and ARVN, 2.596; barometer for, 2.504; Amb. Bunker's views on, 2.616–618; G. Carver's vision of, 2.598; chain of

command, 2.620; Civic Action teams in, 1.306–308; civilian approach to, 2.601, 3.94; civil service reforms under, 3.61; as COMUSMACV's responsibility, 4.471; decentralization of, 3.89; definition of, 2.570; in Delta (*see* Mekong Delta); discrepancies in, 2.674; economic aspects of, 3.55; effects of political turmoil on, 3.441–444; effectiveness of, 2.483, 4.348; emphasis on, 2.413, 2.485, 2.545, 3.97, 4.353; failure of, 2.198, 2.343, 3.667, 4.374; and GVN, 2.532, 2.619, 4.351; Hop Tac Program of, 2.521–527 (*see also* Hop Tac Program); implementation of, 2.378, 2.468, 2.701–702; improvement of, 3.53; intensification of, 3.324; issues of, 2.484–485; JCS and, 2.599, 4.357; Katzenbach on, 4.506; Amb. Komer on, 2.571–574, 2.608, 4.391; Korean forces and, 4.398; LBJ's emphasis on, 2.517–518, 2.542; leverage in, 2.504; limitations of, 2.581, 2.674, 3.60; MACV and, 2.615; Marines and, 2.517, 2.533, 2.559 (*see also* Marine Corps); military advisors involved in, 2.484; "military component" of, 2.599; military support of, 2.548, 2.618; new hamlets of, 2.550; nonmilitary efforts, 2.369; piaster funds for, 2.479; regression of, 3.97; as revolutionary development, 2.494 (*see also* RD); and ROLLING THUNDER, 3.323; rural, 2.550 (*see also* RD); RVNAF and, 2.484, 4.425; and strategic hamlets, 2.411; Amb. Taylor's analysis of, 3.83 (*see also* Taylor, Gen. Maxwell G.: on pacification); U.S. forces and, 2.470, 2.531, 2.604, 4.399, 4.458; U.S. support for, 2.367, 2.486, 2.515, 2.536–542, 2.622, 4.351; Vietnamese concept of, 2.550, 4.396. *See also* Clear and hold; National Priorities Areas; RD; Strategic Hamlet Program
Pacification Council: 2.538
Pacific Command (PACOM): 2.198, 3.451, 3.628
Pacific Command Study Group: 3.342
PACOM. *See* Pacific Command
PAD: 2.566
Pagoda raids: 2.202, 2.203, 2.228, 2.229, 2.265, 2.734, 2.762; repercussions from, 2.232, 2.236. *See also* Buddhist crisis
Panhandle, Laotian: 2.673. *See also* Laos
Panhandle, of NVN: 4.165
"Paper tiger": 1.595, 3.189
Paratroopers: 2.644
Partition lines: 1.540
Pathet Lao: 1.11, 2.12, 2.22, 2.42; and DRV, 1.264; Geneva Accords on, 1.161; Soviet support of, 2.636; and U.S. policy, 2.813; withdrawal from PDJ, 3.518. *See also* Laos
Pattle Island: 2.402
Pau negotiations: 1.28, 1.60–61, 1.67
PAVN (People's Army of [North] Vietnam): 1.204, 2.814; troop strength of, 4.303. *See also* Democratic People's Republic NVA/VC
PBR (river patrol boats): 4.473
PCHT (Packing-Crating-Handling-Transportation): 2.178
PDJ. *See* Plaines des Jarres
Peace Bloc: 3.356, 3.357
Peace Corps: 2.640; counterinsurgency work and, 2.667
Peace demonstrations: bombing pause and, 4.36
Peace feelers: 4.205–206; from Hanoi, 4.135
Peace offensive: 2.368
Peasantry, Vietnamese: 2.460, 2.635, 2.662; alienation of, 2.153, 2.249, 3.74; anti-American feelings of, 1.252; and counterinsurgency effort, 2.312, 2.315, 2.691; discouragement of, 3.501; financial levies on, 2.677; and GVN, 2.576, 2.681, 2.685, 4.397; living standards of, 2.556, 2.710; political apathy of, 2.151, 2.224, 2.698; political issues of, 1.254; programs for, 2.635 (*see also* Strategic Hamlet Program; RD); resettlement of, 2.130, 2.131 (*see also* Refugees); and security problem, 2.592; unrest among, 2.704; and Viet Cong, 2.687, 2.698
Peking-Jakarta axis: 3.267
Pentalateral Protocol of 1950: 2.288
People's Army of (North) Vietnam (PAVN). *See* PAVN
People's Daily: 1.155, 4.634, 4.636. *See also Jen-min jih-pao*
People's Republic of China (CPR, PRP): 2.9, 3.189, 3.214, 3.644–645, 4.665–666; aid to DRV, 3.215, 4.57–58, 4.116, 4.137, 4.227; on armed struggle, 4.634; on bombing, 3.308, 4.25, 4.41; buffer zone of, 4.533; containment of, 3.217–218; five principles of peaceful coexistence, 1.148; intervention possibilities of, 1.379, 1.381–382, 1.388–390, 1.392, 1.399,

People's Republic of China: (*cont'd*) 1.432–433, 1.438, 1.442–443, 1.512–515, 2.78, 2.221, 3.397, 3.572–574, 3.634, 3.636–639, 4.31, 4.50, 4.52, 4.155, 4.164, 4.166, 4.444, 4.624; JCS contingency plans and, 1.512–515; LBJ on, 3.741; Rusk on, 3.724; as threat to Southeast Asia, 1.169, 1.436, 2.822, 3.485, 3.592, 3.655, 4.674, 4.684; on U.S. border violations, 1.530–531, 4.198; U.S. recognition of, 1.595; on U.S. in Vietnam, 1.525–528
People's Revolutionary Committee: 3.87
People's Revolutionary Party: 1.259, 1.345. *See also* National Liberation Front of South Vietnam
Personalism: 1.300–301
Personalist Labor Revolutionary Party. *See* Can Lao Vi Cach Mang Dang
"Personalist revolution": concept of, 2.130. *See also* Diem, Ngo Dinh: personalist philosophy of
Personnel, third country: 2.683
Personnel, U.S.: civil, 2.358; increase in, 3.73; military, 3.90; under Program 4, 4.384. *See also* Dependents, U.S.
Personnel carriers: 2.195
Pessimism: re: ARVN, 2.273; Cassandras, 3.25; Diem gov't, 2.189; Amb. Lodge's, 2.247; about military situation, 3.390; Sec. McNamara's, 2.192, 2.311, 2.363, 3.21; of newsmen, 3.36; re: rural pacification, 3.52; SACSA's, 3.46; of SNIE, 3.42; and Strategic Hamlet Program, 3.34, 3.35; in Washington bureaucracy, 2.194, 3.23
Pesticides: stockpiling of, 2.676
Petroleum: 1.385, 1.436. *See also* POL
Pharmaceuticals: 2.676
Phase-out policy: 2.160–200; announcement of, 2.160; chronology of, 2.165–173; CPSVN forecast of, 2.179; future of, 2.195–196; after Kennedy assassination, 2.191; motivation for, 2.173; 1000-man withdrawal and, 2.188, 2.189; rationale behind, 2.161–162; termination of, 2.198, 2.200; of U.S. advisory forces, 2.178. *See also* Withdrawal
Phat Diem town: 1.136
Phat/Duc government: 2.338
Philippines: anti-Americanism in, 2.57; insurgency of, 2.164; troop contributions of, 4.470, 4.524
Photography: 2.89, 2.114. *See also* Reconnaissance, flights
Phou Kout: 3.534, 3.543
Phu Bai: 2.476
Phuc Yen airfield: 4.208
Phuic Tuy Province: 2.144, 2.150
Phuoc Long Province: 3.438
Phuoc Thanh: 2.70, 2.100
Phuoc Vinh: VC seizure of, 2.12
Phu Yen Province: 2.686; Operation Sea Swallow in, 2.701
Piaster: devaluation of, 2.364, 2.383, 2.480; distribution of, 3.58; evaluation of, 4.345; limit on, 4.343; problems created by lack of, 3.68; under Program #4, 4.384; rate of exchange for, 2.757; troop requirements and, 4.378, 4.430–431; value of, 2.758
Piaster ceiling: CINCPAC force structures and, 4.359; JCS and, 4.362; and Program #4, 4.363; and SVN economy, 4.459; for U.S. elements in Vietnam, 4.340
Pilots CAP: 1.445. *See also* Air Force
Pilot-to-aircraft ratio: 3.70
PL 480: 2.252, 2.310
Plaines des Jarres (PDJ): 2.697, 3.188, 3.196, 3.522; reconnaissance flights in, 3.253
"Plan of Action for South Vietnam": 3.193, 3.199–200
Pleiku Airfield: 2.12, 2.658, 3.5, 3.93, 3.270, 3.287; VC attacks on, 3.271, 3.286, 3.302, 3.303
Pleiku attack: public reaction to, 3.307; and Tonkin Crisis, 3.304; and reprisal operations, 3.304–306
Pleiku-Kontum area: 2.654
Plei Mrong: VC attack on, 2.718
"Plimsol line": 4.385, 4.469
POL (petroleum, oil, lubricants) supplies: 4.62; decision to strike, 4.102–106; dispersed storage system of, 4.61, 4.65, 4.169; vulnerability of, 4.61
POL strikes: 4.79, 4.107–112; "counter-infiltration" and, 4.107; delay and deliberation, 4.58, 4.106; international reaction to, 4.108; launching of, 4.106; news leak on, 4.106; orders for, 4.105–106; political sensitivity of, 4.105–106; risk of counterescalation and, 4.80; strategic failure of, 4.110–112
Poland: and DRV peace feeler, 4.135
Police, National (GVN): AID support of, 2.667; in combat, 2.232; duties of, 2.497–498; extension of police system, 2.675; in lieu of military, 2.140, 2.143, 2.325; pacification and, 2.572; repression by, 2.289; secret, 2.237. *See also* National Police, GVN

Police Aerial Resupply Unit (PARU): 2.645; CIA advisors and, 2.646
Police Field Force (PFF): 2.528, 2.585, 2.586
Policy Planning Staff: on retargeting of bombing, 4.264–265
Political commissars. *See* Political Welfare Division
Political Settlement: hypothetical, 4.613; problems of, 3.225. *See also* Negotiation
Political Welfare Division: 2.707
"Popular Defense Force": 2.313
Popular Forces: 2.497. *See also* Self Defense Corps
Popular Force Training Centers: 2.513
Population: control of, 2.325; of Southeast Asia, 2.817; urban, 2.224; in Vietnamese countryside, 2.505
"Possible Public Reaction to Various Alternatives": 4.559
Potsdam Conference: 1.16
PRACTICE NINE Requirement Plan: 4.412–413, 4.434
PRAIRIE FIRE: 4.214, 4.447, 4.535. *See also* Operation Prairie
Presidential policy review: 3.273
"Presidential Program for Vietnam": 2.30–34
President's Special Committee on Indochina: 1.443
Press, U.S.: complaints against, 2.725; Diem's image and, 2.724, 2.744; on Guam Conference, 4.426; on POL strikes, 4.106; speculation on policy, 3.256. *See also* News media; Public opinion
PRIME BEEF unit: 4.544, 4.546
Principals' meeting (Nov. '64): 3.238, 3.243, 3.244
Priorities Task Force in Saigon, Study of. *See* PROVN Study
Pri Phap area: 3.26
Prisoners, political: 2.344
Prisoners, of war: 4.236; bombing policy and, 4.251; interrogation of, 2.655, 2.703; release of NVA, 2.368; Viet Cong, 2.640
Program 2-AR: 4.94
Program 3: 4.320, 4.322
Program 4: 4.527; air ordinance consumption under, 4.382; air squadrons under, 4.382, 4.383; announcement of, 4.363–365; as antecedent for Program 5, 4.385; changes in, 4.426; deployment plan summary, 4.365; explanation of, 4.365–378; helicopter deployments under, 4.384; importance of, 4.385–387; and inflation, 4.464; JCS ratification of, 4.359; NVA/VC strategy and, 4.420; sorties under, 4.382, 4.383; Systems Analysis and, 4.459
Program 5: 4.593, 4.602; force levels, 4.515, 4.526, 4.548; Sec. McNamara and, 4.523; opening dialogue on, 4.400; prelude to, 4.387; ratification of, 4.527
Program for National Mobilization: 2.195
Program 6: 4.593, 4.594, 4.602
Programs A, B, and C: prepared for LBJ, 4.420–423
Project Mayflower: background of, 3.362, 3.368, 3.378. *See also* MAYFLOWER
Project TAKEOFF: 2.502
Propaganda, Communist: 2.820, 4.67
Propaganda, French: 1.581
Propaganda, U.S.: 1.386, 3.554; in Southeast Asia, 1.439; USIS, 2.640, 2.763
Propaganda, Viet Cong: 2.695, 2.698, 2.771, 4.581
Prosperity and density centers (*khu tru mat*): 1.313; VC disruption of, 1.338. *See also* Agrovilles
Province advisors: 2.326, 2.454. *See also* Advisors, U.S.: Advisory effort
Province chiefs: AID and, 2.286, 2.724; cooperation of, 2.100; after Diem coup, 2.462; incompetence of, 4.578; and MACV, 2.607; military authority of, 2.62; office of, 2.24; origins of, 2.760; power of, 2.135, 2.136, 2.140, 2.325; replacement of, 2.312, 2.315, 3.501; role of, 2.344, 2.554, 2.620, 2.688; selection of, 2.551
Province Pacification Committee: 2.675–676. *See also* Pacification
Provinces: advisory teams in, 2.490. (*See also* Advisory teams); capitals of, 4.567; critical, 2.521; RVNAF in, 4.578; survey of, 2.89, 2.114
Provincial councils: 2.680
Provincial Forces: purpose of, 2.496–498
Provincial training detachment: 2.464
"Provisional Constitutional Act No. 1": 2.272. *See also* Minh government
PROVN study: 2.501, 2.519, 2.576, 2.580–583; "Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of SVN," 2.379–380
Psychological operations (Psyop). *See* Psychological warfare
Psychological warfare: 2.495, 2.582, 2.644, 2.692, 2.762, 3.607

Psyop. *See* Psychological warfare
Public Administration Division (PAD): 2.566
Public opinion, French: 1.522
Public opinion, U.S.: 1.381, 2.514, 3.174, 3.236, 3.249, 4.99, 4.478, 4.561; on bombing, 3.353, 3.354, 4.54; on bombing pause, 4.623; on Diem, 2.751; effect on U.S. policy, 2.325, 2.610; and JCS strategy, 4.495–496, 4.499–500; manipulation of, 3.304; McNaughton and, 4.478–479; of nonmilitary activities, 2.543; optimism on Vietnam, 1.267–268; after Tet offensive, 4.559
Public opinion, Vietnamese: 4.570. *See also* Government of Vietnam: popular support of
Public Safety: 2.676. *See also* Aid, economic

Quang Khe Naval Base: 3.325
Quang Nai Province: 2.150, 2.686, 3.501
Quang Nam Province: 3.501
Quang Ngai Province: 4.433; and "Operation Royal Phoenix," 2.702
Quang Tri Province: 4.569
Quat government: 2.472, 3.5; coup attempt and, 2.356
Quebec Conference, Second: 1.10
Quemoy crisis: 1.616
Qui ap settlement: 1.313
Qui khu settlement: 1.313
Qui Nhon: helicopter companies at, 2.657; VC attack on, 3.271, 3.366

"Radar Busting Week": 3.356
Radar installations: bombing of, 3.184
Radar surveillance: installation in SVN of, 2.8, 2.39, 2.638; during Tonkin Gulf crisis, 3.184, 3.185
Radhakrishnan proposal: 3.363
Radio Hanoi: 2.686, 2.698
Radios: village program of, 2.677
Rail system: as bombing target, 3.341. *See also* Transportation
RAND Corporation: 4.341; reports of, 4.345; Single Integrated Attack Team (SIAT) proposal of, 3.647; VC Motivation and Morale Study of, 4.23, 4.47
Ranger units: patrolling of, 2.722; statistics of, 2.513
Ranger units, Thai: 2.644–645
Ranger units, Vietnamese: 2.678; airborne, 2.644; disbanding of, 2.385, 2.584; raids of, 2.641. *See also* Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
Red River Delta: 2.818
RD (Revolutionary Development or Rural Development): 2.489, 2.515, 2.562, 4.379; assignment of ARVN to, 4.376–377; Cadre program of, 2.568, 2.572, 2.582, 2.584, 4.388, 4.409; civilian functions of, 2.603; and Combined Command Plan, 4.380; criticism of, 2.393; definition of, 2.583; evaluation of, 2.379, 2.394, 2.399; important areas in, 4.434–435; military support for, 2.588; Mobile Training Teams of, 2.395; objectives of, 2.622; OCO assessment of, 2.621–622; as priority effort of ARVN, 4.330; purpose of, 2.488; security weakness of, 4.388; strategy of, 2.385, 2.393; success of, 4.351; U.S. civilian support of, 2.618, 4.329; U.S. support of, 2.491, 2.492, 2.617; U.S. troops and, 2.609; and VC/NVA strategy, 4.419. *See also* Civil operations and Revolutionary Development Support; Pacification; Strategic Hamlet Program
Real New Life Hamlets ("Ap Doi Moi"): 2.621. *See also* Strategic Hamlet Program
RECCE STRIKE: 3.77
Reconciliation: national, 2.399; policy of, 2.765, 4.46
Reconnaissance flights: 2.89, 2.114, 3.291, 3.525, 3.607; and infiltration routes, 3.92; over Laos, 3.253, 3.264; low-level over DRV, 3.266, 3.296, 3.686; need for, 2.381; over NVN, 3.503; in Panhandle, 3.536; and SVN morale, 3.666. *See also* Armed reconnaissance operations
Reforms: civil service, 3.61; during Diem regime, 2.25; land, 1.254 (*see also* Diem government); within GVN Armed Forces, 2.584. *See also* Social reform
Refugees: 2.648, 3.97; camps for, 2.551; in labor force, 2.524; Montagnard, 2.680 (*see also* Montagnards); from NVN, 2.827; problem of, 1.576, 2.552; U.S. ambivalence toward, 2.569
Regiments: numbers of, 2.513
Regional Forces: numbers of, 2.513; purpose of, 2.496–497. *See also* Civil Guard
Religion: in Vietnam, 2.729, 3.71. *See also* Buddhist crisis; Catholic church; Catholics
Reporting system: Diem-Nhu, 2.201; falsification in, 2.273; inadequacy of,

2.164, 2.665; Vietnamese distortion of, 3.31. *See also* Optimism
Reprisal actions: 2.353, 3.246, 3.250, 3.266, 3.288, 3.296, 3.686; conditions for, 3.295; effectiveness of, 3.294; end to, 3.347; February 1965 raids, 3.269, 3.271; increase in, 3.153; initiation of, 2.354, 3.270, 3.320; intensification of, 3.682; need for, 3.190; and NVN provocations, 3.306, 3.680; plans for, 3.299; and Pleiku, 3.303. *See also* Bombing; Retaliatory strikes; Sustained reprisals
Republican National Committee: 2.807
Republican Party of Vietnam: 2.709
Republican Youth: 1.311, 1.312, 2.721
Republic of China: 2.641, 2.648–649, 2.822; agents of, 2.290, 2.402; forces of, 1.378, 1.443, 2.81–82, 2.652
Republic of (South) Vietnam: anti-Americanism in, 2.282, 2.289, 2.312, 2.373, 2.377–378; assassinations in, 1.336; borders of, 3.94; casualties of, 2.772; Catholic refugee population in, 1.291; Communist organizations in, 1.259; communist threat to, 2.706; constitution of, 2.369, 2.383–385; counterinsurgency in, 1.268, 2.650, 2.661, 2.699–704, 2.726; defense budget of, 2.352; disruption of society in, 1.291–293; DRV insurgency in, 1.260; economic policy of, 2.3; economic situation in, 2.272, 2.721, 2.757–758, 3.444, 4.459; economic stability in, 2.577, 4.400–401; factionalism in, 3.88; Franco-American differences on, 1.211, 1.214, 1.221, 1.285–286; French military forces in, 1.2; global policy and, 4.442–443; guerrilla operations in, 3.70; GVN control over, 4.375, 4.563; history of, 3.217; identity card system, 2.675; import licensing in, 2.757–758; independence of, 4.643; kidnappings in, 1.336; leadership in, 3.24, 3.261; military-civilian coordination in, 2.721; military draft in, 3.261; military needs of, 2.465; morale in, 3.667, 3.669, 3.684, 4.502; nationalism in, 4.457, 4.463; neutralism in, 3.37–38; pacification program in, 1.254, 3.48–49, 4.313; people of, 1.291, 3.42, 3.95; political deterioration of, 3.228, 4.675; politically distinctive regions of, 1.291; political situation in, 3.76, 3.107–108, 3.261, 3.345, 3.433–444; political tradition in, 2.665; priority zones of, 2.522; recruiting campaign in, 3.103; refugees in, 1.248, 1.290; rice exports of, 2.757; rural pacification plans for, 1.305–314; schools in, 2.820; security of, 2.2, 2.356, 2.830, 3.94; Self Defense Forces of, 2.655 (*see also* Self Defense Forces); self-determination of, 4.175; separate armies in, 2.720–721; situation analysis of, 3.423–425; strategic importance of, 2.753, 2.821, 3.217, 3.219, 3.220, 3.237; terrain of, 2.91; and terrorism, 4.620; Tripartite talks on, 1.227–229, 1.235–239; unification and, 3.249; urban situation in, 1.256–257; U.S. aid to, 1.268, 3.64 (*see also* Aid, economic; Agency for International Development); U.S. commitment to, 4.47–48; U.S. leadership in, 3.4; U.S. military presence in, 1954, 1.182, 1.249–250, 2.438; U.S. objectives in, 1.213, 2.36, 3.497; U.S. presence in, 2.472, 3.52, 4.24; U.S. role in, 2.380, 2.502, 2.826, 3.1–6, 3.18, 3.40, 3.57, 3.74; war economy of, 2.11, 2.364, 2.366, 2.368, 2.369, 2.382–383, 2.389; *See also* GVN; Vietnam
Reserves: mobilization of, 4.385, 4.564; naval, 4.544; need for, 2.654
Reserves call-up: 3.484, 4.527, 4.591; Honolulu Conference and, 4.312, 4.314; JCS on, 4.347, 4.437, 4.490, 4.495, 4.542, 4.543, 4.545; Under Sec. Katzenbach on, 4.506, 4.507; LBJ on, 4.93–94, 4.299; Sec. McNamara on, 4.575; McNaughton on, 4.481; in 1968, 4.599; *New York Times* article on, 4.512; Plimsoll Line, 4.444; political aspects of, 4.314, 4.320; and troop deployments, 4.309, 4.541, 4.589, 4.591; and U.S. Army, 4.545
Resettlement: 2.150; in Binh Duong Province, 2.149; losses due to, 2.153; prior to Strategic Hamlet Program, 2.133–134; resistance to, 2.130, 2.131. *See also* Air strikes; Reprisal actions
Reuters News Service: 2.80
Revolutionary Committee: 1.234, 1.304, 2.27
Revolutionary Committees: of VC, 4.539
Revolutionary Congress. *See* National Congress of the Vietnamese People
Revolutionary Development Cadre: 2.581. *See also* RD
Revolutionary League (Dong Minh Hoi): 1.49
Revolutionary Youth League: 1.44
"Revolving door" governments: 3.1

Rhade tribesman: 2.281, 2.338, 2.339
Rice: 1.450, 2.112, 2.366, 2.480; shortage of, 2.310; SVN production of, 2.820; transportation of, 3.444; U.S. supply of, 2.397
Rice-roots level: 4.397
Rice tax: of VC, 2.655
Ridgway Report: 1.55
"Rings of steel": 2.522
Riverine Assault forces: 4.473
River patrol forces: estimate of, 4.473
RLT (Regimental Landing Teams): 4.543, 4.584
ROK. *See* South Korea
Roles and Mission Study Group: 4.329; COMUSMACV comments on, 2.385; recommendations of, 2.385, 2.576, 2.583, 2.620
ROLLING THUNDER: 2.354, 2.472, 3.6, 3.272, 3.324, 3.338, 3.454, 4.18–20; accomplishments of, 4.53–58; during bombing pause, 4.33; cancellation of, 3.325; chronology of, 3.284–286; and CIA, 4.74; concentration in "funnel," 4.474; cost-ineffectiveness of, 3.332–334; definition of, 3.93, 3.339–340; effect on NVN, 4.68–70, 4.73, 4.109–110, 4.355; expansion of, 4.18, 4.29, 4.196; failure of, 4.138; Hanoi's morale and, 4.348; initiation of, 3.271, 3.321–324; justification for, 3.95, 3.329, 3.330–332; LBJ on, 3.338, 3.703; magnitude of, 4.136; Sec. McNamara on, 2.595, 3.339–340; measurable damage from, 4.55–56; objectives of, 4.40; political gains of, 4.19; psychological gains of, 4.19; rationale for, 3.309, 4.20; restrictions on, 4.212; resumption of, 3.272, 3.378, 3.381, 4.39, 4.43, 4.44, 4.53; review of, 4.229, 4.421–422, 4.533; Soviet responses to, 3.329, 3.332; stabilization of, 4.125–126, 4.131, 4.349, 4.356; and targets, 3.272, 4.19, 4.151, 4.184, 4.421–422
Romania: peace negotiations and, 4.95, 4.228
Rostow Proposal: 2.12, 2.73, 2.96
"Rostow Thesis": 3.109, 3.200, 3.202; critique of, 3.101–102, 3.110
Royal Laotian Army: defeat of, 2.61. *See also* Laos
Royal Laotian government (RLG). *See* Laos
"Royal Phoenix." *See* "Operation Phuong Hoang"
Rubber: 1.376, 1.436, 1.450; as export, 2.757; production of, 2.711
Rules of engagement: 3.191, 3.299. *See also* Joint Chiefs of Staff
Rumor campaigns: and counterinsurgency, 1.575
"Rural Community Development Centers." *See* Agrovilles
Rural Construction: maps of, 2.524; PROVN study and, 2.577. *See also* Pacification; RD
"Rural Construction Campaign": 2.144, 2.562
Rural Construction Council: 2.538
Rural Construction Plan: GVN support of, 2.367, 2.501
Rural Forces (RF): 2.494. *See also* Pacification
RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces): 2.3, 2.511, 2.546; build-up of, 2.162, 2.163, 2.164, 2.175, 2.474, 3.90, 3.435, 3.441, 3.507; chain of command of, 2.6; CPSVN estimates of, 2.181; decrease in, 3.69; defeat of, 2.361; desertion in, 2.194, 2.779; effectiveness of, 2.180, 2.507–510, 4.292, 4.402–403; evaluation of, 2.401; expansion of, 2.24; funding of, 2.386, 3.27, 3.60; goals of, 3.63; improvement in, 2.408, 2.509; inadequacy of, 3.432; increase in, 2.37, 2.40, 2.43, 2.48, 2.135, 2.164, 2.177, 2.461, 2.510, 3.4, 3.83; Komer on, 4.440–441; leadership of, 2.510, 3.438; limitations on, 3.432, 4.343; mobility of, 2.128; modernization of, 4.557; morale of, 2.510; officer corps of, 1.323; and pacification, 2.491–494; performance of, 3.391–393; phase down of, 3.27; problems of, 2.337; and RD, 4.427; reorganization of, 2.342; review of, 2.510; and soldiers' pay, 2.358; strength of, 2.511, 3.53, 3.54, 3.72, 3.93, 3.532, 4.439; training of, 2.11, 2.176, 2.181, 2.465, 3.544; U.S. advisory role to, 2.357, 2.382; U.S. reinforcement of, 3.392–393, 4.548, 4.566; Gen. Wheeler's assessment of, 4.347

Sabotage: 2.712; in Hanoi, 1.579; RLG force for, 2.646; Viet Cong, 2.771. *See also* Counterinsurgency; Terrorism
SACSA (Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities): 2.164, 2.184, 3.25; evaluation of Vietnam situation, 2.192, 3.46–47; and extension of advisors, 3.76; on GVN force build-up, 3.75; "Military and

Security Situation," 3.46–47; statistics of, 2.771–780
SADEYES: 4.335. *See also* Bombing; Weapons
Saigon: as autonomous city, 2.526; during Aug. 1963, 2.736; flow of rice into, 4.480; morale in, 2.4, 3.293; port of, 2.288, 2.383, 2.387, 2.389, 2.390, 2.391, 2.398; provinces around, 2.138; riots in, 2.334, 2.750, 2.751, 2.754; security of, 2.481; speculative traders in, 2.761; surrounding area of, 2.177, 2.525, 2.532; threat to, 2.525; U.S. personnel in, 2.761; U.S. troops in, 2.461; VC terrorism in, 2.699; Viet Minh attack on, 1.575
Saigon-Cholon Waterworks: 2.250, 2.251, 2.753, 2.762
"Saigon commando": 2.611
Saigon Electric Power Project: 2.250, 2.251, 2.753, 2.762
Saigon Embassy, U.S.: 2.517; divisions within, 2.613, 2.621; Lansdale Report on, 1.573–583; relations with military, 2.784; relations with Washington, 2.610, 2.611; reorganization of, 2.537, 2.540, 2.607, 2.611, 2.613, 2.619; and State Department, 2.649; on Tonkin crisis, 3.203–204; US/DCM, 3.37
Saigon Military Mission (SMM): creation of, 1.574
Saigon Peace Committee: 1.344
SAIGON 768: of Amb. Lodge, 2.784, 2.786, 2.787
Sainteny Mission: 1.222
St. Louis Post-Dispatch: 3.263, 3.307
Saipan Training Station: 2.649, 2.791
SAM (TALOS): 4.535. *See also* Weapons
SAME: on pacification plans, 2.350
San Antonio formula: 4.205–210, 4.237, 4.253, 4.581; Hanoi's reaction, 4.264; Taylor on, 4.249
Sanctuaries: 4.337; JCS concern about, 4.410–415. *See also* Hot pursuit
SAR operations. *See* Search and rescue operations
Sayabouri Province: 2.672
SEA. *See* Southeast Asia
SEACABIN: 4.217–222, 4.231
SEAAPC. *See* Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee
SEACORD: 3.297, 3.302, 3.579
SEA DRAGON: 4.213, 4.216, 4.229, 4.256, 4.534, 4.544; expansion of, 4.258
Search and destroy operations: 3.395, 3.461, 3.462, 3.470, 4.402, 4.557, 4.565; expectations of, 3.481; force levels for, 3.396; implications of, 3.395–396; sweeps, 2.140; Amb. Taylor's opinion of, 3.396; U.S. emphasis on, 4.313
Search and rescue (SAR) operations: 3.552, 3.584–585
Sea Swallow. *See* Operation Hai Yen II; Operation SEA SWALLOW
Sea Swallows: Father Hoa's, 2.721
SEATO. *See* Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
Secretary of Defense, Office of. *See* Office of the Secretary of Defense
Secretary of Defense conferences: 2.165, 2.175, 2.176, 2.194. *See also* Clifford, Clark; McNamara, Robert S.
Sector Advisor Teams: numbers of, 2.513
Securing: concepts of, 2.495–498
Security, U.S.: 1.416, 4.633; JCS on, 4.346; expenditures for, 1.421; McNamara on, 4.635; and vital interests in Vietnam, 4.661
Security, Vietnamese: in countryside, 2.400, 4.578 (*see also* Countryside, Vietnamese; Peasantry); internal, 2.435, 2.682; local area, 2.495; problem of, 2.602; RD and, 2.581; strategy of, 3.394; in Vietnam, 2.31
Security Training Center (STC): programs for, 2.648
Self Defense Corps (SDC): 1.256, 2.138, 2.175, 2.434, 2.465, 3.30; army units and, 2.678; casualties of, 2.774–777; desertions of, 2.779–780; failure of, 1.314; increase in, 2.675; independent missions of, 2.703; MAAG support of, 2.8, 2.38; morale of, 2.311, 2.460, 3.501; pillaging by, 3.495; reorganization of, 3.506; U.S. Marines and, 2.476; U.S. support of, 2.8, 2.37, 2.656; Viet Cong penetration of, 2.698. *See also* Congress, U.S.
Senate, U.S.: on Brussels Pact, 1.35–36; on Vietnam policy, 3.263
Senate Armed Services Committee: hearings on air war, 4.197, 4.198, 4.199, 4.204
Senate Committee on Appropriations: Sec. McNamara before, 4.633–635. *See also* Stennis subcommittee hearings
Senate Foreign Relations Committee: hearings on Vietnam war, 4.98, 4.262, 4.588; Rusk before, 4.401. *See also* Fulbright Committee hearings

"Senior Informal Advisory Group": 4.266
Separatism: 3.87
Seven-Nation Conference: 2.387–407
Seven-point program, U.S.: 1.144, 1.555–556, 2.357, 2.358; French reaction to, 1.145. *See also* Geneva Conference, 1954
17th Parallel: 1.574
Seventh Fleet: 1.373, 3.286
"Sheer mass": concept of, 2.575
SHINING BRASS: strategy of, 4.421, 4.422, 4.423
Shipping: 1.376
Ships, gunfire: 4.473. *See also* Maritime operations
Short-Range Branch: analysis of, 4.571
"Short-Term Prospects in Southeast Asia": 3.42
"Show the flag" visits: 1.378
SIAT. *See* Rand Corporation
Sino-Soviet Bloc: 2.46
Sino-Soviet Defense Pact: 4.52
Sino-Soviet schism: 4.642
SitReps: 3.39
Skoda Munition Works: 1.594
"Slow squeeze": 3.112
SNIE (Special National Intelligence Estimates): 2.25, 3.2; on bombing expansion, 4.76; on bombing intensity, 4.68–70; on Communist reactions, 1.525–531, 3.480, 3.484; on counterinsurgency, 2.729–733; on DRV support of VC, 2.15–16, 2.107, 2.109; on Soviet attitudes and intentions, 4.469; on SEATO force commitment, 2.78. *See also* National Intelligence Estimates
"Social construction": 2.551, 2.553. *See also* RD
Social reform: 2.556; emphasis on, 2.558; need for, 2.544. *See also* Reforms
Sortie levels: stabilization of, 4.133
Southeast Asia (SEA): 1.375, 3.37; American interests in, 4.650; collective defense of, 1.143; Communist domination of, 1.453, 1.475, 2.37; Communist threat to, 4.679; confidence in U.S. of, 2.57; contradictions of policy in, 3.231; defense of, 1.509–511, 4.643; disease in, 2.58; facts about, 1.473; ignorance in, 2.58; independence of, 4.677; line of defense in, 4.88–89; natural resources of, 1.376, 1.587, 1.594, 1.623, 2.817, 4.663, 4.691; poverty in, 2.58; "static" defense of, 1.510; strategic importance of, 2.663–666, 2.817, 3.710, 3.713, 3.715, 4.654, 4.677; and Third World War, 4.680; U.S. aid programs in, 1.386; U.S. commitments in, 4.665; U.S. policy in, 2.783, 3.524–529, 3.541–545
Southeast Asia Aid Committee: 1.365
Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee (SEAAPC): 1.197–198
Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty: 1.212, 4.638, 4.642, 4.654, 4.660, 4.676. *See also* Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)
Southeast Asia Program Office: 4.313
Southeast Asia Security Treaty: 4.636. *See also* Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)
Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO): 2.808, 3.710, 3.726, 4.645, 4.661, 4.665, 4.668, 4.683; American planning for, 1.143; British on formation of, 1.174; commitments to, 2.8; contingency plans of, 2.91, 2.649; contradictions of, 1.212; future of, 2.663; and military intervention in SVN, 2.42, 2.76; and plan 5, 2.41, 2.92; proposed commitment of, 2.76–78; protocol of, 2.111; Rostow proposal for, 2.12; troops of, 2.45, 2.112, 2.113, 3.226; and U.S., 4.670, 4.684; U.S. objectives for, 1.181; U.S. obligation to, 2.49, 2.636, 2.800–813, 2.826, 3.720, 4.641, 4.654, 4.672, 4.680; U.S. organization of, 1.562; Vietnam role of, 2.58, 2.61, 2.80
South Korea: defense capacity of, 1.425; Marine Brigade of, 4.409, 4.325; troops in SVN, 4.292, 4.309, 4.470, 4.524, 4.549, 4.608. *See also* Korea; Korean War
South Vietnam. *See* Republic of (South) Vietnam
Soviet Union. *See* Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
Special Branch Police: 2.585
Special Committee on the U.S. and Indochina: 1.94. *See also* Smith, Gen. W. Bedell
Special Forces: 2.641; advisors of, 2.454; BPP training of, 2.645; and CIA, 2.683; introduction into Vietnam of, 2.34, 2.438, 2.445; and Montagnards, 2.644, 2.717; in Nha Trang, 2.50; Vietnamese, 2.51, 2.762; withdrawal of, 4.566
Special Forces Group: 2.638; establishment of, 2.660; functions of, 2.661;

internal defense plans and, 2.682; schools of, 2.669
Special intelligence: 2.114. *See also* SNIE
Special Studies Group: of JCS, 4.291–292. *See also* Joint Chiefs of Staff
Special Troops: of North Vietnam, 2.656. *See also* North Vietnamese Army; NVA/VC
Spectator: 4.332
"Spoiling" offensive: 4.330, 4.392, 4.565
"Squeeze-and-talk," concept of: 3.602, 3.605
Staley Mission: 2.3, 2.11, 2.62–65
Star Shell illumination: 3.299
State. *See* Department of State, U.S.
State of Vietnam: 1.181. *See also* Republic of (South) Vietnam
Statistics: as indicators of war effort, 2.771; for military situation in Vietnam, 4.624–625; for 1962–1963, 2.773
Status of Forces agreement: 2.361
STEEL TIGER: 3.338, 3.341. *See also* BARREL ROLL
Stennis subcommittee hearings: 4.217; and alliance with military, 4.203–204; escalation and, 4.455–456
Strategic Air Command (SAC): 3.320–321
Strategic Army Force (STRAF): 4.590
"Strategic Concept for South Vietnam": 2.142, 2.720
"Strategic Hamlet Kit": 2.152
Strategic Hamlet Program: 2.128–159, 2.177, 2.186, 2.225, 2.275, 2.457, 3.24, 3.27; and agroville program, 1.313; appraisal of, 2.187, 2.249, 3.30; chronology of, 2.131–132; collapse of, 2.276, 3.28–29; completed hamlets, 2.154; consolidation of, 2.250, 2.752; and counterinsurgency, 2.445; criticism of, 3.394; definition of, 2.140; and Diem government, 3.30; discouragement about, 2.194; evaluation of, 3.26; failures of, 2.231, 2.245, 3.28, 3.501; forced labor in, 2.275; GVN report on, 2.151; hamlets in, 2.674, 2.675, 2.676, 2.681, 2.684, 2.685, 2.686, 2.687, 2.691, 2.697; maturation of, 2.755; Sec. McNamara's evaluation of, 2.756; and pacification, 2.411; as priority policy, 2.180, 2.700; problems of, 2.720; reinforcement of, 2.723; setbacks in, 3.40; slowdown of, 3.34; success of, 2.225, 2.718; and VC patrols. 2.717; vulnerability of, 2.152. *See also* Pacification; RD; Villages
"Strategic village": 2.142. *See also* Strategic Hamlet Program
Strategy, U.S.: 3.453; analysis of, 4.420–423; evolution of, 1.496–499; implementation of, 2.720; meetings on, 3.192–194; against NVN, 3.200, 4.189 (*see also* Bombing; Reprisal actions; War effort); objectives of, 2.719; overt military pressure, 3.200, 3.207; reassessment of, 4.581; in Southeast Asia, 3.158; of security, 3.444–452, 3.478. *See also* United States Vietnam policy
Struggle Movement: 2.286, 2.289; in Da Nang, 2.374; and of, 2.382; and GVN, 2.288; in Hué, 2.374; rise of, 2.369, 2.373–376; US/SVN relations during, 2.374–378; suppression of, 2.372, 2.384. *See also* Buddhist crisis
Students, Vietnamese: arrests of, 2.242, 2.252, 2.255; demonstrations of, 2.236, 2.334, 3.85–86; Diem policy toward, 2.744; rioting of, 2.335, 2.546
Study group, interagency: evaluation of U.S. policy, 3.156; on proposed military actions, 3.155; on war effort, 2.576–588
Subsector Advisor Teams: 2.513
"Subterranean war": 2.548
Sugar: SVN production of, 2.820
Summer Study Group. *See* JASON Summer Study
Summit meeting: 4.187
Sunrise. *See* Operation Sunrise
Supply: problems in, 4.542; routes of, 2.655–656. *See also* Ho Chi Minh Trail
SUSREPS (senior U.S. representatives): 2.579
Sustained reprisal, policy of: 3.314–315, 3.687–691; McG. Bundy outline on, 3.308–315; cost of, 3.312; effect on Hanoi, 3.314; effect on SVN, 3.314; estimated effect on VC, 3.314; objective of, 3.313; and pacification, 3.313; steps leading to, 3.690; vs. graduated reprisals, 3.315. *See also* Reprisal actions
SVN. *See* Republic of (South) Vietnam
SWATO craft: GVN capture of, 3.252
Systems Analysis: on air war effectiveness, 4.132; on ARVN forces, 4.425; on deployment capability, 4.513–514; on effectiveness of U.S. forces, 4.425; on force levels, 4.461–462; force requirements, 4.458; on JCS requirements, 4.525; on MACV requirements, 4.472; on OSD requirements, 4.525; on

Systems Analysis: (*cont'd*)
  Southeast Asia, 2.507; on troop request by COMUSMACV, 4.456; on VC/NVA activity, 4.388

T-28: operations, 3.182, 3.477, 3.543, 3.553, 3.608
Tactical Air Control System (TACS): 2.657
Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR): 2.293, 2.356, 2.360, 2.375, 2.376, 2.477, 2.517
Tactical Fighter Squadrons: 4.576
Taiwan: 2.822. *See also* Republic of China
TALOS missiles: 4.213
Tan Son Nhut: 2.657, 2.658
TAOR. *See* Tactical Area of Responsibility
Targets: for air strikes, 4.57; approval at Guam Conference, 4.150; categories of, 4.165–166; exhaustion of, 4.170; Hanoi as, 4.198; Hanoi power station as, 4.445; LOC's as, 3.340, 4.73, 4.534, 4.565; in NVN, 3.288, 3.298, 3.299–300, 3.382, 3.383; and population, 4.621; Presidential authorization for, 4.135; rail system as, 3.341; review of, 4.204–205; selection of, 4.51; sensitive, 4.166; "slams," 4.337
Target system: development of, 3.340; and POL, 4.66
Task Force: flood, 2.88, 2.91, 2.101, 2.105, 2.106, 2.121 (*see also* Flood relief); Gilpatric (*see* Gilpatric Task Force); military, 2.90, 2.92, 2.93, 2.104; OREGON, 4.408, 4.435, 4.451
TASS: 4.135
Taxes: to finance war effort, 1.421–422, 4.595 (*see also* War effort: financing of); levied by Viet Cong, 2.718
Taylor Mission: 2.1, 2.14, 2.18, 2.19, 2.37, 2.76, 2.84–93, 2.410, 2.447–449; announcement of, 2.80, 2.81, 2.82; "first fruits" of, 2.126; recommendations of, 2.89–97; speculation about, 2.56; U.S. build-up and, 2.454
Taylor Mission Report: 2.5, 2.14, 2.15, 2.92–98, 2.652; and American aid, 2.103; contradictions in, 2.98–99; "Evaluations and Conclusions," 2.92, 2.98; on international communism, 2.107; and JFK's decisions, 2.104; Sec. McNamara's interpretation of, 2.108–109; and news stories, 2.102, 2.103, 2.104; optimism of, 2.102
Tay Ninh Province, 2.144
Taylor Report. *See* Taylor Mission Report
TDY team: 3.33, 3.34
Technicians: Filipino, 2.647, 2.683; Thai, 2.683
Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM): 2.433
Terrorism: 2.646, 2.692, 2.712; Communist use of, 2.820; Viet Cong, 2.697, 2.771 (*see also* Viet Nam Cong-San)
Tet offensive: 2.414, 4.231, 4.234–235, 4.568; and bombing, 4.250; and Clifford Group, 4.241; and Johnson Administration, 4.232; losses during, 4.570; result of, 4.596, 4.604; surprise of, 4.539; and U.S. peace overtures, 4.236; U.S. reaction to, 2.484, 4.238; and VC infrastructure, 4.578; and VC strategy, 4.563
Tet pause: 4.141–144; Pope on, 4.143; U.S. violations of, 4.141. *See also* Bombing pause
Textiles: SVN production of, 2.820
TF OREGON: 4.408. *See also* Task force
Thai Armed Forces Security Center: 2.646
Thai Border Patrol (BPP): 2.645
Thailand: 3.182, 3.257, 3.267, 3.681, 3.685; and American influence, 4.618; American military instructors in, 2.637; Communist threat to, 4.582; counterinsurgency in, 2.661; and domino theory, 1.373, 4.613; and Kennedy administration, 2.811; military aid group in, 1.365; neutralism in, 2.57; rice exports of, 1.385; security of, 1.377, 4.618; troop contributions of, 4.389, 4.470, 4.524; U.S. ambassador to, 2.20; U.S. economic aid to, 1.440; U.S. forces in, 2.673, 2.812; U.S. policy in, 2.67, 2.98, 3.529
Thai National Police: 2.645
Theater CINC: 2.541
Third Country forces: 2.547, 3.462; deployment of, 3.105; introduction of, 3.704; in SVN, 4.291
Third National Congress: of NVN Communist Party, 2.693
Thoi Luan (Newspaper): 1.315, 1.333–334
Thompson proposal, 2.139–140, 2.144; Washington reaction to, 2.142
"Three-division plan": 3.469
"Three-withs" doctrine: 1.254
Thua Thien Province: 4.569

Thui Duc Reserve Officers' School: 2.102, 2.704

Ticonderoga, USS: 3.184, 3.185. *See also* Tonkin Gulf crisis

Tiger Island: 3.252; barracks, 3.554

Times of Vietnam: 2.148, 2.253; anti-American campaign of, 2.255; burning of, 2.270

Tin: in SE Asia, 1.376, 1.436, 1.450, 1.592

Tin Bac: 1.316

"Tit-for-tat" concept: 3.287, 3.288

Tonkin: 1.389, 1.393, 1.442, 1.449, 1.576; defense of, 1.437; military situation in, 1.518–519; Viet Minh dominated zones, 1.190

Tonkin Gulf crisis: 2.163, 2.199–200, 2.279, 3.4, 3.83, 3.183–192, 3.288, 3.298, 3.519, 3.710; aftermath of, 3.59, 3.187–188; and DRV motives, 3.186; interagency differences on, 3.202; JCS review of, 3.185; naval patrols, 3.194; retaliatory action, 3.185, 3.186, 3.189, 3.304; Sec. Rusk on, 3.721; U.S. policy on, 3.517, 3.521, 3.522. *See also* Tonkin Gulf Resolution

Tonkin Gulf Resolution: 2.277, 2.319, 3.108–109, 3.520, 3.722; effects of, 3.107, 3.109. *See also* Tonkin Gulf crisis

Tou Morong: district headquarters at, 2.473

Tourane: troop movements and, 2.41

Trade Fair of 1962: 2.640

Training center team: 2.464. *See also* Mobile Training Teams

Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM): 1.581–582

Transportation: costs of, 4.532; NVN, 4.57, 4.58; in SVN, 2.820

Treaty: Diem's request for, 2.12, 2.14, 2.71. *See also* Diem government; SEATO, 2.4

Tribes: nomadic, 2.638. *See also* Montagnards

"Trilemma": 3.694, 3.696

Triumvirate: of Khanh, Minh, and Khiem, 2.277, 2.335, 2.338, 3.86. *See also* Troika regime

Troika regime: 3.88

Troika "Signoff": 2.286, 2.367, 2.380, 2.479, 2.499

TROJAN HORSE photography mission: 3.365

Troop Carrier Squadron: 2.657

Troop deployment: 2.14, 3.342, 3.351; Communist reaction to, 1.433; cost of, 4.556; evaluation of, 2.16, 4.592; excessive, 4.326; French, 1.545; Galbraith's views on, 2.671; increase in, 4.594; in June 1965, 4.606–609; during Kennedy administration, 2.803, 2.805; Sec. McNamara projections of, 4.623; under Phase IIA, 4.310; and piaster spending, 4.378; and point of diminishing returns, 4.611; public support of, 4.560; recommended additional, 4.619; in relation to population, 4.470; Rusk/McNamara evaluation of, 2.16, 2.110–116, 2.117, 2.118, 2.120; U.S. commitment to, 4.564; and USCONARC, 4.542. *See also* Ground forces

Troops, Australian: 2.355

Troops, Korean: 2.355

Troops, Nationalist Chinese: 2.365

Troops, U.S.: in April 1954, 1.486; commitment of, 2.40, 2.43, 2.48, 4.154; in Delta, 4.389; and ground war, 3.389; increases in, 3.31, 4.426; introduction of, 2.665; JCS on, 4.359; justification of, 2.66; limit on, 4.489; in 1961, 2.2; in 1966, 4.94, 4.321; noncombatant role for, 2.66, 4.313 (*see also* Pacification); objective of, 2.13; overextension of, 1.425; under Phase II, 4.308; requirement for, 4.606; and RVNAF, 2.508; shortages in, 4.541; suggested increases in, 3.456–457; in Thailand, 2.811 (*see also* Thailand); and Vietnamese civilians, 4.510; and Vietnamese morale, 2.366; and Gen. Westmoreland, 3.389; withdrawal of (1963), 3.17, 3.18, 3.52. *See also* Ground forces

Truce: 4.139. *See also* Bombing pause; Tet pause

Truman administration: China policy of, 2.30; intervention in Indochina and, 1.55; on justification of war, 1.584, 1.587–591

Truman Doctrine: 1.35, 4.248

Tungsten: 1.592

Turkestan (Soviet ship): 4.187

Turkey: defense of, 1.615

Turner Joy, USS: Attack on, 2.329, 3.184, 3.185. *See also* Tonkin Gulf crisis

Tuyen Duc Province: Montagnards in, 2.687. *See also* Montagnards

20th parallel: 3.343

21-point program: LBJ's approval of, 3.703

U-2 flights: 3.547. *See also* Armed reconnaissance operations
Udorn: troops and, 2.41
"Ugly American, The": 2.440
Underdeveloped countries. *See* Developing countries
UK/USSR Co-chairmen Plan: 3.325, 3.347; Bundy paper on, 3.317; estimated effects on China, 3.327
Unification, policy of, 2.344, 2.713
United Command Plan: 1.513. *See also* Joint Command
United Front of Nationalist Forces: 1.230, 1.303. *See also* Vietnamese Nationalist Party
United Kingdom. *See* Great Britain
United Nations (U.N.): 3.227; and anti-infiltration role of KANZUS, 4.334; charter of, 1.15, 1.16, 1.555, 1.565, 2.811, 4.648, 4.663; fact finding team of, 2.253; and Indochina cease-fire, 1.141; JFK's address to, 2.804–805; Security Council involvement in VN, 3.321, 3.322, 3.323, 4.94
United States: aid programs of, 3.81; allies of (*see* Allies); atomic capability of, 1.417, 2.799 (*see also* Nuclear weapons); as co-belligerent, 3.305; counterinsurgency plan for SVN, 1.268 (*see also* Counterinsurgency); economy of, 1.426; at Geneva Conf., 1.479, 1.536, 1.538, 1.565, 1.568–569 (*see also* Geneva Conference, 1954); and GVN, 2.354, 2.355, 2.359, 2.360, 2.361, 2.362, 2.368, 2.381, 2.383, 2.384; and Khanh government, 2.334, 3.85; as Policeman of Universe, 4.640, 4.682; prestige of, 2.40, 2.51, 3.216, 3.217, 3.218, 3.296, 3.376, 3.381, 3.683, 3.700; and RD, 4.300 (*see also* RD); relations with Tri Quang, 2.375–376; relations with USSR, 4.54; Saigon embassy of, 2.280, 2.287 (*see also* Saigon embassy)
United States Army: Army Security Agency (ASA) of, 2.640, 2.641, 2.642; Civil Affairs teams, 2.360, 3.103–104; and NSC, 1.471–472
United States Army Support Group Vietnam (USASGV): 2.178; phaseout policy of, 2.179
United States Congress. *See* Congress, U.S.
United States Department of Defense. *See* Department of Defense (DOD), U.S.
United States Department of State. *See* Department of State, U.S.
United States Fast Carrier Task Force: 1.514
United States forces: 2.285, 3.390; buildup of, 2.198, 3.100, 3.391, 3.498, 4.491; Wm. Bundy on, 4.503–504; commitment of, 2.80; deployment of, 3.418, 3.419–420, 3.426–430, 4.399 (*see also* Troop deployment); effectiveness of, 4.458; employment of, 4.297–299; estimated maximum for, 2.179, 2.192; and French, 1.467–471; and FW forces, 3.482–483, 4.468; graduated use of, 3.170; increases in, 2.279–280, 4.497, 4.503–504; infiltration and, 4.371; JCS estimate of, 2.78–79; levels, 4.348, 4.355; limitation of, 3.1; logistic, 3.449; in Mekong Delta, 4.339; noncombat role of, 2.91; operational performance, 4.376; phased withdrawal of, 2.160–200, 2.316; piaster spending of, 4.340; primary role of, 4.397; projected commitment of, 2.111, 2.112, 2.113, 2.114, 2.118; projected deployments, 3.638; projected strength of, 2.91, 3.637; and RD, 4.410; recommendations for, 2.90–92, 2.93, 2.109; required for victory, 4.291; and RVNAF, 4.298 (*see also* RVNAF); search and destroy operations of, 4.329; strength of, 4.325. *See also* Ground forces; Troops, U.S.
United States Information Agency (USIA): counterinsurgency responsibility of, 2.668; Deputy Ambassador and, 2.565; and pacification program, 2.528, 2.590
United States Information Service (USIS): 2.307; attacks on buildings of, 2.352; extension of, 2.326
United States Intelligence Board (USIB): 2.641
United States Marines. *See* Marine Corps
United States military: political restraints on, 4.401; self-deception in, 3.25; support of strong campaign against DRV, 3.115. *See also* Military operations
United States Military Agency: 2.383–384
United States Mission: objectives of, 3.198, 3.533; pacification and, 2.573; reorganization of, 2.589. *See also* Saigon embassy
United States Mission Liaison Group: 2.530, 2.531
United States Navy: 2.76, 3.164, 3.639;

on bombing, 4.186; at Cam Ranh Bay, 3.164; Mine Division 73, 2.657; introduction of, 3.65; mobile construction battalions, 4.543, 4.544; and reserve call-up, 4.545; surface operations, 4.421–423

United States Operations Mission (USOM): 2.149, 2.355, 3.27, 3.29, 3.30; and Combat Police, 2.762; extension of, 2.326; leverage and, 2.479; and piaster cash funds, 3.68–69; and Strategic Hamlet Program, 2.687

United States objectives in Vietnam: 2.373, 2.377, 3.3, 3.4, 3.85, 3.219, 3.349, 3.360, 3.499–500, 3.601, 3.622–628, 3.713, 4.557, 4.559, 4.567; and alternatives, 3.53, 3.624; McG. Bundy's analysis of, 3.360; Wm. Bundy on, 3.113–114, 3.245, 3.657, 3.678, 3.723, 4.182; Amb. Bunker and, 4.515; definition of, 3.172; disagreement about, 2.577, 4.188, 4.400; Amb. Durbrow's view of, 2.635; "hard-line," 4.38; humiliation and, 4.47; immediate, 4.562; and JCS, 4.178–179, 4.395, 4.436; Katzenbach on, 4.506, LBJ on, 4.599; level of effort required, 3.393; limited, 3.3, 3.201; long-term, 3.159–160; McNaughton's views of, 4.393; military, 2.188, 3.169, 4.395, 4.781; NIE on, 3.169; in 1966, 4.315; NSAM on, 3.349; political, 3.181, 4.604; and political solution in Vietnam, 4.659; public support for, 4.457; short-term, 3.159–160; softening of, 4.233; in Southeast Asia, 1.434–443, 3.580–583, 3.588, 3.592, 4.533; and State Department, 3.731; study of, 3.154; Vice-Pres. Humphrey's view of, 4.647

United States Vietnam commitment: 2.432, 3.171, 4.632, 4.636, 4.638, 4.671; Wm. Bundy's interpretation of, 4.182–183; compromise solution and, 4.619; and Diem government, 2.411 (*see also* Diem government); intensification of, 3.106

United States-Vietnam policy: 2.673, 3.18, 3.535, 3.743, 4.315, 4.639; and allies, 4.270; Asian concerns and, 1.34–40, 2.57, 2.825, 4.615; George Ball on, 4.615; bipartisan, 2.808; and Wm. Bundy, 3.692; on China, 4.684; clarification of, 2.583; and commitment of ground forces, 1.464 (*see also* Ground forces); Communist reactions to, 1.525–531; and compromise program, 4.46; conditions for intervention and, 1.503; constitutionality of, 3.116; covert, 2.640–642, 3.289, 3.291, 3.500 (*see also* Covert activities); credibility and, 2.90, 2.91, 2.93, 2.97, 2.106, 2.111, 3.212, 3.432, 4.351; dissension on, 3.107, 3.164, 4.188; and domino theory, 1.186 (*see also* Domino theory); economic aspects of, 2.639, 3.269; Eisenhower position, 4.89; on escalation, 4.154 (*see also* Escalation); essentials of, 4.620; failure of, 4.580; GVN reaction to, 2.483, 4.181–182 (*see also* GVN); humiliation of, 4.22, 4.616; independence and neutrality, 2.193; justification of, 3.51 (*see also* War effort: justification of); and Laos, 2.18; of least commitment, 3.246; leverage, 4.610; limitations on, 4.584; and Line of Containment, 1.186; middle course of, 4.612, 4.614; military aspects of, 2.638; and military pressure, 3.269; toward military regime, 3.268; and mutual defense agreements, 1.475; on negotiations, 3.247, 4.154; in 1964, 3.291; in 1967, 2.493; priorities of, 2.582–583; psychological aspects of, 2.639–640; reactions to, 4.242–243; reversal of, 2.672; review of, 1.472, 3.262, 3.270, 4.81–93, 4.574; rules of engagement, 3.517, 3.529, 3.537; shift by McNamara, 4.107; Strategic Hamlet Program and, 2.454–455. *See also* Intervention; Optimism; Strategic Hamlet Program; War effort

USAID. *See* Agency for International Development

USASGV. *See* United States Army Support Group Vietnam

USCONARC: 4.542

US-GVN Treaty: lack of, 2.282, 2.288–289

USMACV. *See* Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

U.S. News and World Report: 1.621

USSR: 3.691; aid to DRV, 4.57, 4.58, 4.116, 4.137; atomic capability of, 1.423; and bombing halt, 3.376–377; and Ho Chi Minh, 1.33–34; influence on DRV, 2.694, 3.215; introduction of SAMs to NVN, 4.477; Amb. Kohler's analysis on, 3.373; and mining of NVN ports, 4.147, 4.173, 4.485; and negotiated settlement, 4.475; on partitioning, 1.134, 1.565; and Pleiku reprisal actions, 3.308; possible reactions to U.S. attack on China, 1.530–531; reactions to bombing of NVN, 3.387,

USSR: (*cont'd*)
4.25; role in SE Asia, 2.637, 3.266, 3.301; support for DRV, 1.265, 3.266–267, 3.302, 3.485, 4.57, 4.58, 4.137; SVN interests of, 3.301, 3.656; Amb. Thompson and, 4.246–247; threat of, 1.414, 1.415, 1.424, 1.427, 4.34; and U.S. intervention in Indochina, 1.527, 1.528, 1.529, 1.536; and U.S. policy, 1.167, 1.428, 2.109; U.S. relations with, 1.427, 2.5, 2.21; Vietnam policy of, 1.610, 2.113, 2.116; and weapons for NVN, 4.490

Van Dien vehicle depot: 4.135
VC. *See* Viet Nam Cong-San
VC/NVA (Viet Cong/North Vietnam Army): allied Contacts with, 4.373; and ARVN, 4.377; capabilities in SVN, 4.377, 4.403–404; control of rural population, 4.375; losses of, 4.370, 4.456, 4.458, 4.563; reinforcement of, 4.372, 4.404–405, 4.456; strategy of, 4.405–406, 4.407, 4.418–420; strength in SVN, 4.371, 4.405, 4.442; Gen. Westmoreland's divination of, 4.405–406. *See also* North Vietnam Army; Viet Nam Cong-San
Vientiane: 3.196
Viet Cong. *See* Viet Nam Cong-San
Victory: military, 2.580; political, 2.544; psychological, 4.328. *See also* War effort
"Victory and Defeat in Guerrilla Wars: The Case of South Vietnam": 3.381
Viet Nam Cong-San (VC): 1.339, 2.86, 2.533, 3.656; agents of, 2.675, 2.696; allied contacts with, 4.394; areas controlled by, 2.460, 2.654, 3.52, 3.501; attack at Bien Hoa, 3.208, 3.288; attack on U.S. Embassy, 3.347; attacks of, 2.71, 2.155, 2.190, 2.363, 2.755, 2.773, 2.774, 3.34; attacks on Pleiku, 2.353, 3.5; attacks on Quinon, 2.353; and Buddhist crisis, 2.183; build-up of, 2.134, 2.330, 2.690, 3.3, 3.24, 3.502; Bundy assessment of, 3.311; capabilities of, 3.597; casualties of, 2.772, 2.774–777 (*see also* Casualties); counterinsurgency and, 2.200; decreased attacks of, 2.224; defections of, 2.156, 2.680, 2.695, 2.778; in Delta region, 3.27; DRV support for, 2.16, 2.63, 3.53, 4.295; early guerrilla insurgency of, 1.338; effectiveness of, 2.249, 2.437, 2.680, 2.695, 3.29, 3.42, 3.44, 3.424–426, 3.439, 3.651–652, 4.571; estimated strength of, 2.32, 2.198, 3.80, 4.325; gains of, 2.194, 2.303, 3.29; and GVN, 2.36, 2.532, 2.596, 2.699, 2.790; and hamlet elections, 4.453; history of, 1.330–331; increased offensive of, 2.184, 2.273, 2.275, 3.18, 3.32, 3.685, 4.300; infiltration of, 3.495, 3.500; influence of, 3.28; infrastructure of, 2.694–699, 4.513; international communist support of, 2.63; legacy of Viet Minh, 1.333; logistic support of, 2.695–696; and "lull before the storm" concept, 3.437, 3.443, 3.456; methods of operation, 2.655, 3.441; military aircraft of, 3.634; monsoon offensive of, 2.546–547; morale of, 2.364, 2.714, 3.653; and negotiations, 3.393; objectives of, 1.337, 2.448, 4.547; organizing techniques of, 1.332–333; popular support for, 2.696; and RD, 4.368, recruiting of, 1.329, 2.602–719, 4.371; reinforcement of, 2.180, 4.404–405; rural support of, 1.258, 2.204, 2.545, 2.595, 2.750; near Saigon, 2.522; strategy of, 3.531, 4.552; strength of, 2.72, 2.134, 2.718, 3.80, 3.668; successes of, 2.192, 2.195, 2.196, 3.2, 3.287, 3.494; summer offensive of, 3.440; supplies for, 2.75, 2.526, 2.717, 2.719; taxes of, 2.718; terrorism of, 1.334–339, 2.698, 4.298; threat of, 2.5, 2.20, 2.23, 2.24, 2.31, 2.826; transport system of, 2.711; underestimation of, 4.586; in urban areas, 2.698; U.S. intelligence estimates of, 1.266, 3.175, 4.551; weapon losses, 2.773–778; weapons of, 3.736; Gen. Westmoreland's assessment of, 3.464. *See also* National Liberation Front; VC/NVA
Viet Minh: 1.42, 1.54, 1.392, 2.808; anti-Japanese resistance of, 1.45; areas controlled by, 1.45, 1.123, 1.395, 2.93; armies of, 2.22; Chinese Communist aid to, 1.83, 1.97, 1.187; and Chinese Communist advisors, 1.395; Chinese Communist support of, 1.398, 1.437; and Chinese Nationalists, 1.46; deployment of, 1.193; and Diem, 1.329; distinguished from Viet Cong, 1.328; DRV and, 1.45; and elections, 1.328, 1.540; and Geneva Accords, 1.173; and Geneva Conference, 1.549, 1.561; ground force strengths of, 1.193, 1.401; guerrilla action of, 1.432; ICP control of, 1.47; land reform under, 1.308; and Lien Viet, 1.46; losses at Dien

Bien Phu, 1.484; national appeal of, 1.395; negotiated settlement with, 1.379; negotiations with French, 1.539; objectives of, 1.492; organization of, 1.295, 1.495; and Pathet Lao, 1.119–120; recruiting of, 1.329; regrouped to NVN, 1.258, 1.328; reprisals of, 1.542; strength of, 1.123, 1.397; in SVN, 1.258, 1.328; tactics of, 1.495; terrorist activity of, 1.334; in Thailand, 1.393; U.S. seven-point program and, 1.558. *See also* Viet Nam Doc Lap; Dong Minh Hoi
Viet Minh Resistance Committee: 1.579
Vietnam: and Asian security, 4.656, as Associated State of the French Union, 1.58; bilateral security treaty with, 2.19; chronology of withdrawal from, 1.204–209; as cork in the bottle, 4.633; demarcation line proposals for, 1.142–143, 1.146, 1.560, 1.572; effects of partition on, 1.244; elections (see All-Vietnam elections); formation of, 1.362; French withdrawal from, 1.180, 1.181, 1.285–286; historic development of, 1.292; independence of, 1.6, 1.40–41, 1.64, 1.593; "line of chalk cliffs" defensible position of, 1.533; partitioning of, 1.288, 1.531, 1.532, 1.535, 1.539; reform parties in, 1.43; relations with France, 1.189–190; revolutionary parties of, 1.43–44; strategic importance of, 2.818; theocratic parties in, 1.43; unification of, 1.166, 1.284–285, 3.362; U.S. involvement in, 1.188, and U.S. national security, 4.681. *See also* Democratic Republic of Vietnam; Government of Vietnam; Republic of South Vietnam
Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VNCC): 2.378, 3.212
Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (League for the Independence of Vietnam): formation of, 1.44
Vietnamese Armed Psywar Company: 1.575
Vietnamese Augmentation to U.S. Army (VATSUSA): 2.401
Vietnamese Civic Action: 2.640
Vietnamese Internal Security Council: 2.355
Vietnamese Joint General Staff. *See* Joint General Staff, Vietnamese
Vietnamese Junk Force: 2.39, 2.198, 2.638; MAP support for, 2.8. *See also* Junks
Vietnamese National Army (VNA): 2.432, 4.543; and Diem, 1.230; draft and, 1.491; ethnic composition of, 1.68; force levels for, 1.216–217; logistics of, 1.493; U.S. training of, 1.215
Vietnamese Nationalist regime: U.S. recognition of, 1.53; and Bao Dai, 1.25
Vietnamese National Party (VNQDD): 1.44, 1.49, 1.314–315, 2.536
Vietnamese Ranger Force: 2.373, 2.653
Vietnamese Veterans Legion: 2.648
Vietnam plebiscite. *See* All-Vietnam elections
Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD). *See* Vietnamese National Party
Vietnam Revolutionary League (Dong Minh Hoi): 1.44
"Vietnam solution": 3.685
Vietnam's Presidential Guard Battalion: 2.648
Vietnam Workers Party (Dang Lao Dong): 1.328
Village Radio System: 2.675–676
Villages: air strikes and, 2.723; attitudes in, 2.718–719; Communist operations in, 2.96; control of, 2.462, 2.583; RVNAF in, 4.578; Special Forces in, 2.724; strategic, 2.674, 2.675, 2.676, 2.681 (*see also* Strategic Hamlet Program); Viet Cong and, 2.655, 2.696, 2.717; young males in, 2.536. *See also* Peasants; RD
"Village war." *See* Pacification
Vinh Bien: 3.26
Vinh Binh Province: 2.686
Vinh Linh: 3.286
Vinh Long Province: 2.150, 3.26
Vinh Thanh: frontier at, 4.567
Vit Thu Lu Army Barracks: as target, 3.298
VMP: 4.543
VNA. *See* Vietnamese National Army
VNQDD. *See* Vietnamese National Party
Vo Dat: 4.567
Voice of America (VOA): broadcast of, 2.235, 2.236, 2.245, 2.734, 2.743, 2.763; and Diem coup, 2.791
Vu Con barracks: 3.325
Vung Tau Charter: 3.191
Vung Tau training centers: 2.568

Wall Street Journal: 4.106
War effort: as albatross, 4.88; Americanization of, 2.478, 4.549, 4.564; Wm. Bundy's justification of, 4.610, 4.668–669; commitment to, 4.558; conditions for success, 3.201; conventional stage of, 4.621; dissension on, 4.78–79,

War effort: (*cont'd*)
 4.454; domestic criticism of, 3.23, 4.454–456; domestic reactions to, 4.174, 4.495–496, 4.499–500; Eisenhower administration's justification of, 1.591–629; financing of (1953–1954), 1.408, 1.421, 4.339, 4.527, 4.557; and GVN assistance, 4.558; implications of, 4.179; Johnson administration's justification of, 3.707–743, 4.626–684; justification of, 2.415; Kennedy administration's justification of, 2.794–797; liberal reaction to, 4.560; military judgment and, 4.356; progress indicators and, 2.457, 2.755–756; public support for, 2.578, 4.561; reassessment of, 4.238–258, 4.549, 4.583, 4.604; risk of expanding, 1.466; satisfactory solution to, 1.451; shifting premises of, 4.355; task force on, 2.576 (*see also* Task force); Truman administration's justification of, 1.587–591; two parts of, 4.397; uncertainty about, 4.585–586; unfavorable trends in, 2.770–780; U.S. losses, 3.333–334 (*see also* Casualties); U.S. objectives and, 4.175; and U.S. options, 3.589, 3.599–601, 3.602, 3.604, 3.659, 4.620; views on end of, 2.532, 2.548, 2.595, 2.719, 4.348; waste in, 2.575; world opinion of, 2.742, 4.81. *See also* War of attrition

Warfare: advisory, 2.474 (*see also* Advisory effort); counterinsurgency, 2.32 (*see also* Counterinsurgency); local, 2.801; unconventional, 2.641, 2.643–649, 2.682, 2.813. *See also* Guerrilla warfare

War of attrition: 2.725, 4.370, 4.371, 4.509; Katzenbach on, 4.507

Warrenton Conference: 2.359, 2.517, 2.539, 2.541, 2.542

Wars of liberation: 2.35, 2.816, 3.710, 3.731, 3.732, 3.733, 3.740, 4.632, 4.633, 4.641, 4.643, 4.644, 4.646, 4.653, 4.664, 4.666, 4.668; McNamara's view of, 3.712–715; Soviet support of, 2.22; U.S. attitude toward, 2.660; Westmoreland on, 4.405

Wars of national liberation. *See* Wars of liberation

War zone C: 4.571

War zone D: 2.129, 2.139, 2.141, 4.571; ARVN sweep in, 2.138

Washington Daily News, The: 4.511

Washington Evening Star, The: 2.555, 2.557

Washington Post, The: 2.613

Washington Star, The: 4.389

Waterways: control of, 2.90. *See also* Riverine Assault Forces

Waves of Love: 2.720

Weapons: losses of, 2.772, 2.773, 2.778; nuclear, 1.88, 1.466, 1.512, 2.322, 3.65, 3.175, 3.238; for PARU teams, 2.645; of Thai border patrol, 2.645; of Viet Cong, 2.655, 2.696

White House meeting: of April 1965, 3.99; of September 1963, 2.235

White House memorandum: 1.501–503

White House statements: on McNamara-Taylor Mission Report, 2.187–188; of October 1963, 2.161, 2.191, 2.196–197

White Lotus sect: 2.823

White Star teams: in Laos, 2.463, 2.464

Win: McNaughton's definition of, 4.293; Phase II concept of, 4.302

Wire: stockpiling of, 2.676

Withdrawal: abandonment of, 2.278; as alternative, 3.717–718; chronology of, 2.165–173; French, 1.542; and Guam Conference, 4.426; as issue at Manila Conference, 2.608; of 1000 troops, 2.190, 2.191–192, 2.193, 2.205, 2.250, 2.251, 2.276, 2.316; of 1000 U.S. advisors, 2.303; phased, 2.278; political effects of, 4.611; proposed for 1963, 2.752, 2.756, 2.770; proposed for 1967, 4.504; of U.S. dependents, 3.244, 3.266, 3.288, 3.297, 3.306, 3.315, 3.630, 3.686. *See also* Phase-out policy

World Culture: 1.170

World Federation: Buddhist Inquiry Mission from, 2.745

Xa Loi pagoda: raid on, 2.232. *See also* Buddhist crisis; Pagoda raids

Xenophobia, Indochinese: 1.431

Xom Hue Hamlet: 2.144

YANKEE TEAM: 3.196, 3.253–254, 3.291, 3.297; disclosure of, 3.264; in Laos, 3.566–567, 3.575, 3.577, 3.608

Yellow Peril: concept of, 4.683

Young Turks: 2.279–280, 2.340, 2.342, 2.346. *See also* Armed Forces Council; Diem coup

Youth Corps: 2.152. *See also* RD

Glossary

AA	Air America; also antiaircraft
AAA	Antiaircraft artillery
ABM	Antiballistic Missile
ABN	Airborne
ACA	Asian Communist affairs
ACR	Armored cavalry regiment
ADP	Automatic data processing
AFB	Air Force Base
AFC	Armed Forces Council
AID	Agency for International Development
AIROPS	Air operations
AM	Airmobile
AMA	American Medical Association
AMB	Ambassador
ANG	Air National Guard
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States
APB	Self-propelled barracks ship
ARC	Administrative and Research Committee (Viet Minh)
ARC LIGHT	B-52 bombing program
ARL	Landing craft repair ship
ARVN	Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
ASA	(U.S.) Army Security Agency
ASAP	As soon as possible
ASD	Assistant Secretary of Defense
ASW	Antisubmarine warfare
BAR	Browning automatic rifle
BARREL ROLL	Code name for U.S. bombing operations against Laotian infiltration routes and facilities
BDE	Brigade
Black radio	In psychological warfare, broadcasts by one side that are disguised as broadcasts for the other
"Blowtorch"	Nickname given Robert Komer during summer of 1966 for applying great pressure to both the Mission and Washington agencies
BLT	Battalion landing team
BN	Battalion
BOB	Bureau of the Budget
Bonze	Buddhist monk
BPP	Border Patrol Police
B-52	U.S. heavy bomber
B-57	U.S. medium bomber
CAP	Combat air patrol; also prefix used to designate White House cablegrams sent through CIA channel; also Country Assistance Program, of AID
CAPs	Combined action platoons
CAS	Covert action branch, Saigon office of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Term also applied to CIA in Laos
CAT	Civil Air Transport, airline based on Taiwan
CBU-24	Type of cluster bomb
CCAF	Communist Chinese Air Force
CDC	Combat Development Command
CDIG	Civilian Irfegular Defense Groups
CEF	French Expeditionary Corps
CFD	Conference final declaration (Geneva Conference, 1954)
CG	Civil Guard
CHICOM	Chinese Communist
CHINAT	Chinese Nationalist
CHMAAG	Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group
CI	Counterinsurgency
CI Course	Counterinsurgency course
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIAP	Inter-American Committee for the Alliance for Progress
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Groups
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCPACAF	Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Force

CINCPACFLT Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
CINCRVNAF Commander in Chief, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
CINCSTRIKE Commander in Chief, Strike Command
CIO Central Intelligence Organization (South Vietnam)
CIP Counterinsurgency Plan; also Commodity Import Program
CJCS Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CMD Capital Military District
CNO VNN Chief of Naval Operations, Vietnamese Navy
COMUS U.S. Commander
COMUSMACV Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONARC Continental Army Command
CONUS Continental United States
COPROR Committee on Province Rehabilitation
CORDS Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
I Corps Military region, comprising the five northern provinces of South Vietnam
II Corps Military region in South Vietnam, comprising the Central Highlands and Central Coastal area
III Corps Military region in South Vietnam, comprising the provinces surrounding Saigon
IV Corps Military region, comprising southern Vietnam
COS Chief of station, CIA country team
COSVN Council of senior U.S. officials in South Vietnam, including ambassador, Commander of American forces, CIA chief, and others
Country team Council of senior U.S. officials in South Vietnam, including ambassador, commander of American forces, CIA chief, and others
CPR Chinese People's Republic
CPSVN Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam
CSS Combat Service Support
CTZ Corps tactical zone
CVA Aircraft carrier
CY Calendar Year
C-123 U.S. transport aircraft

DASD Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
DCM Deputy Chief of Mission
DCPG Defense Command Planning Group
DDR&E Director of Defense Research and Engineering
Deptel (State) Department telegram
DeSoto patrols U.S. destroyer patrols in Tonkin Gulf
DIA Defense Intelligence Agency
DMZ Demilitarized Zone
Doc Document
DOD Department of Defense
DPM Draft presidential memo
DRV Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam
DTA Divisional tactical area
DTZ Misprint for CTZ
DULTE Cable identifier, from Geneva to State Department

E and E Escape and evasion
EA Bureau of East Asian Affairs in the State Department
ECA Economic Cooperation Administration
ECM Electronic countermeasures
EDC European Defense Community
Embtel U.S. embassy telegram
EPTEL Apparently a typographical error for Deptel or Septel
ERP European Recovery Plan
EXDIS Exclusive (high level) distribution

FAF French Air Force
FAL Forces Armées Laotiennes (Lao Armed Forces)
FAR Forces Armées Royales (Royal Armed Forces of Laos)
FARMGATE Clandestine U.S. Air Force strike unit in Vietnam (1964)
FE and FEA Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department
FEC French Expeditionary Corps
FFORCEV Headquarters Field Force, Vietnam
FLAMING DART Code name for reprisal actions for attacks on U.S. installations
FLASH message Urgent telegram
FOA Foreign Operations Administration
FW Free World
FWMA Free World Military Assistance
FWMAF Free World Military Assistance Forces
FY Fiscal year

FYI	For your information
F-105	U.S. fighter-bomber
GAM	Groupes Administratifs Mobiles
GNP	Gross national product
GOP	U.S. Republican Party
GRC	Government of the Republic of China (Nationalist China)
GVN	Government of (South) Vietnam
G-3	U.S. Army General Staff branch handling plans and operations
Hardnose	Code name for a CIA operation in the Laos corridor
HES	Hamlet Evaluation System
HNC	High National Council of SVN
Hop Tac plan	operation planned to clear and hold Saigon and its surroundings, 1964
HQ	Headquarters
HSAS	Headquarters Support Activity Saigon
IAP	Immediate Action Program
IBP	International Balance of Payments
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
ICC	International Control Commission for Vietnam, Laos
ICEX	Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
IG	Inspector General
IMCSH	Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INR	Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State and CIA
in ref.	in reference to
ISA	International Security Agency; also Office of International Security Affairs in the Department of Defense
ISI	Initial support increment
IVRC	Interzone V Regional Committee
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSM	Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum
JFK	John Fitzgerald Kennedy, U.S. President
JGS	Vietnamese Joint General Staff
JOC	Joint US-GVN Operations Center
Joint Chiefs	Joint Chiefs of Staff
Joint Staff	Staff organization for the Joint Chiefs of Staff
JTD	Joint Table of Distribution
Jungle Jim	Aerial commando operations
JUSPAC	Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Saigon
J-2	Intelligence Branch, U.S. Army
J-3	Operations Branch, U.S. Army
KANZUS	Korean, Australian, New Zealand, and United States
KIA	Killed in action
KMT	Kuomintang
LANTFLT	Atlantic Fleet
Lao Dong	Communist party of North Vietnam
LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson, U.S. President
Liberation Front	National Liberation Front
LIMDIS	Limited distribution
LOC	Lines of communication (roads, bridges, rails)
LST	Tank Landing Ship
LTC	Lt. Colonel
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAB	Marine Amphibious Brigade
MAC	Military Assistance Command
MACCORDS	Military Assistance Command, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force
MALTS	Mobile Advisory Logistics Teams
MAP	Military Assistance Program
Marigold	Code name for peace talk feelers put out by North Vietnam through Poles, November 1966
Marops	Maritime operations
MATs	Mobile Advisory Teams
MAYFLOWER	Code name for bombing pause
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MDP	Movement for the Defense of Peace
MEB	Marine Expeditionary Brigade
MEDCAP	Medical Civil Action Program
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force

MIA Missing in action
MIG Soviet fighter aircraft (Mikoyan i Gurevich)
MOD Minister of Defense
MORD Ministry of Revolutionary Development
MRC Military Revolutionary Committee (or Council); Ministry of Rural Construction
MRF Mobile Riverine Force
MR5 Highland Area

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO Noncommissioned officer
NFLSV National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam
NIE National Intelligence Estimates
NLF National Liberation Front (of South Vietnam)
NMCB Navy mobile construction battalion
NMCC National Military Command and Control (System)
NNSC Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
NODIS No distribution (beyond addressee)
NRC Nambo Regional Committee
NRM National Revolutionary Movement (*Phong Trao Cach Mang Quoc Gia*)
NSA National Security Agency
NSAM National Security Action Memorandum
NSC National Security Council
NVA North Vietnamese Army
NVN Democratic People's Republic of (North) Vietnam

O&M Operations and Management
OASD Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
OB (Enemy) Order of Battle; also Operation Brotherhood
OCB Operations Control Board, Operations Coordinating Board
OCO Office of Civil Operations (pacification)
OEEC Organization for European Economic Cooperation
Opcon Operations Control
Oplan Operations plan
Ops Operations
OSA Office of the Secretary of the Army
OSD Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSS Office of Strategic Services

PACFLT Pacific Fleet
PACOM Pacific Command
PAD Public Administration Division
Para Paragraph
PARU Police Aerial Resupply Unit
PAT Political Action Team
PAVN People's Army of (North) Vietnam
PB Planning Board
PBR River patrol boat
PCF French Communist Party
PDJ Plaine des Jarres, Laos
PDM See DPM
Peiping Peking
PEO Program Evaluation Office
PF Popular Forces
PFF Police Field Force
PI Philippine Islands
PL Pathet Lao
PNG Provisional National Government
POC Peace Observation Committee of the UN
POL Petroleum, oil, lubricants
POLAD Political adviser, usually State Department representative, assigned to a military commander
PriMin Prime Minister
PROVN Study Study of the Priorities Task Force in Saigon
PRP People's Revolutionary Party, Communist element in the NLF
PRV People's Republic of Vietnam
Psyops Psychological operations
PTF Fast patrol boat
P-2V U.S. patrol aircraft

QTE Quote

RAND Rand Corporation (research organization)
RAS River assault squadron
RCT Regimental Combat Team
RD Revolutionary Development; also Rural Development
R&D Research and Development
RECCE Reconnaissance
Reclama Protest against a cut in budget or program
REF Reference, meaning "the document referred to"
Reftel In reference to your telegram, or telegram referred to

RF Regional Forces
RFK Robert F. Kennedy
RF/PF Regional Forces/Popular Forces
RLAF Royal Laotian Air Force
RLG Royal Laotian Government
RLT Regimental Landing Team
ROK Republic of (South) Korea
ROLLING THUNDER Code name for sustained bombing operations against North Vietnam
Rpt Repeat
RSM Robert S. McNamara
RSSZ Rungsat Special Zone
RT ROLLING THUNDER Program
RTA Royal Thai Army
RT-28 Name of U.S. aircraft
RVN Republic of (South) Vietnam
RVNAF Republic of (South) Vietnam Air or Armed Forces
RVNF Republic of (South) Vietnam forces

SA Systems Analysis Office in the Department of Defense
SA-2 Russian surface-to-air missile
SAC Strategic Air Command
SACSA Special Assistant to the JCS for Counterinsurgency and Special (covert) Activities
SAM Surface-to-air missile
SAME Senior Advisors Monthly Report
SAR Search and rescue
S-day (Bombing) strike day
SDC Self Defense Corps
SEA Southeast Asia
SEAAPC Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee
SEACABIN "Study of the Political-Military Implications in Southeast Asia of the Cessation of Aerial Bombardment and the Initiation of Negotiations," Joint Staff and ISA Study
SEACOOR Southeast Asia Coordinating Committee
SEACORD Coordinating mechanism of U.S. ambassadors and military commanders in Southeast Asia
SEA DRAGON Naval surface operations against North Vietnam
SEATO Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SecArmy Secretary of the Army
SecDef Secretary of Defense
SECTO Cable identifier, to Secretary of State from overseas post
Septel Separate telegram
S-hour (Bombing) strike hour
SIAT Single Integrated Attack Team
Sitrep Situation Report
SMM Saigon Military Mission
SNIE Special National Intelligence Estimate
Soldiers of Geneva Untrained members of Viet Minh units regrouped to DRV after Geneva Accords
SpeCat Top Secret Special Category (of reports, messages, etc.)
SQD Squadron
SSI Sustaining support increment
State U.S. State Department
STC Security Training Center
STRAF Strategic Army Force
SUSREPS Senior U.S. representatives
SVN South Vietnam
SVNese South Vietnamese

TACS Tactical Air Control System
TAOR Tactical area of responsibility
TCS Tactical Control System
TDY Temporary duty
TEDUL Cable identifier, State Department to Geneva
TERM Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission
Tet Lunar new year; also 1968 offensive during Tet
TF Task force
TFS Tactical Fighter Squadron
Theater CINC A resources allocation committee chaired by the AID Mission Director, and a MACV advisory structure partially under the Ambassador and partially separate
34A 1964 operations plan covering covert actions against North Vietnam
TO&E Table of organization and equipment (for a military unit)
TOSEC Cable identifier, from State Department to overseas post
Triangle Code name for an allied operation not otherwise identified in the documents
TRIM Training Relations and Instruction Mission
TRS Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
T-28 Name of U.S. fighter-bomber (provided for use of Southeast Asian governments)

UD Unilateral declaration (Geneva Conference, 1954)
UE Unit equipment allowance
UH-1 U.S. helicopter
UK United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNO	United Nations Organization
UNQTE	Unquote
URTEL	Your telegram
USAF	United States Air Force
USARAL	United States Army, Alaska
USAREUR	United States Army, Europe
USARPAC	United States Army, Pacific
USASGV	United States Army Support Group, Vietnam
USCINCPAC	See CINCPAC
USG	United States Government
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIB	United States Intelligence Board
USIS	United States Information Service
USOM	United States Operations Mission (U.S. economic aid apparatus in Saigon)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UW	Unconventional warfare

VATSUA	Vietnamese Augmentation to U.S. Army
VC	Viet Cong
VM	Viet Minh
VN	Vietnam
VNA	Vietnamese National Army (old term)
VNAF	(South) Vietnamese Air Force or Armed Forces
VNese	Vietnamese
VNQDD	Pre-independence, nationalistic Vietnamese political party (Vietnam Quoc Dan Dong)
VNSF	(South) Vietnamese Special Forces
VOA	Voice of America

WALLEYE	Guided bomb
WESTPAC	Western Pacific Command
Westy	Nickname for General William C. Westmoreland
White radio	In psychological warfare, broadcasts admitted by the side transmitting them
WIA	Wounded in action
W/T	Walkie-talkie

YAK-28	Soviet aircraft
Yankee Team	Phase of the Indochina bombing operation
YT	See Yankee Team

UN	United Na
UNO	United N
UNQTE	Unqu
URTEL	Your t
USAF	United S
USARAL	Unit
USAREUR	Uni rope
USARPAC	Uni
USASGV	Unite Group, Vietnan
USCINCPAC	S
USG	United Sta
USIA	United Agency
USIB	United Sta
USIS	United St ice
USOM	United sion (U.S. econ Saigon)
USSR	Union of publics
UW	Unconventio
VATSUA	Vietna U.S. Army
VC	Viet Cong

[illegible]

VM Viet Minh
VN Vietnam
VNA Vietnamese National Army (old term)
VNAF (South) Vietnamese Air Force or Armed Forces
VNese Vietnamese
VNQDD Pre-independence nationalistic Vietnamese political party (Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang)
VNSF (South) Vietnamese Special Forces
VOA Voice of America

WALLEYE Guided bomb
WESTPAC Western Pacific Command
Westy Nickname for General William C. Westmoreland
White In psychological warfare, broadcasts identified by the side transmitting them
WIA Wounded in action
W/T Walkie-talkie

YAK-28 Soviet aircraft
Yankee Team Phase of the Indochina bombing operation
YT See Yankee Team

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ISBN 0-8070-0522-3